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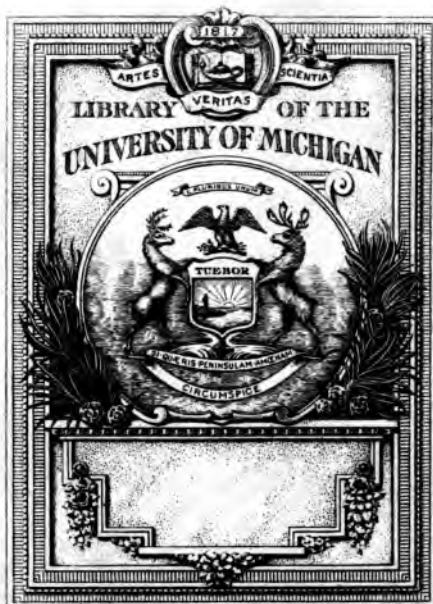
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THE INTIMATE STRANGERS

By BOOTH TARKINGTON



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499 A

THE INTIMATE STRANGERS

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY
BOOTH TARKINGTON

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CHARACTERS

(In the order of their appearance)

THE STATION-MASTER
WILLIAM AMES
ISABEL STUART
FLORENCE
JOHNNIE WHITE
HENRY
AUNT ELLEN
MATTIE

822.7
T19 in

Produced by Erlanger, Dillingham, and Ziegfeld at
the New National Theatre, Washington, D. C.,
October 31, 1921, with the following cast:

THE STATION-MASTER *Charles Abbe*
AMES *Alfred Lunt*
ISABEL *Miss Burke*
FLORENCE *Frances Howard*
JOHNNIE WHITE *Glenn Hunter*
HENRY *Frank J. Kirk*
AUNT ELLEN *Elizabeth Patterson*
MATTIE *Clare Weldon*

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I. *A railway station. A night in April. During Act I the curtain is lowered to denote a lapse of a few hours.*

ACT II. *The living-room at ISABEL'S. The next morning.*

ACT III. *The same. That evening.*

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THE INTIMATE STRANGERS

ACT I

SCENE: *The rise of the curtain discloses a darkness complete except for an oblong of faintly luminous blue; this is a large window; and one or two stars are seen through the upper panes. After a moment a door up right is opened and a man enters carrying a lantern. He pushes a switch button near the door and two bulbs, shaded by green painted tin, come to life, right center; two other bulbs, left center, take on similar life simultaneously. These lights hang by wires from the ceiling.*

The interior revealed is that of a small railway station, a "way station" at an obscure junction in the country. The walls are wainscoted in wood to a height of four feet; above that is plaster painted a tan brown. In the right wall half way up is the ticket window, with a little shelf; the up-and-down sliding inner panel of the window closed. Up to this, in right wall, is a door. In the back wall up right is another door, that which has admitted the man with the lantern. Center in the rear wall is the window. There is a stove, left, with a pipe running to the left wall. The only decorations are some printed

posters giving notice of changes in train schedules, a Navy Recruiting poster, a "warning" concerning forest fires, a penny-in-the-slot weighing machine against the rear wall, and "No Smoking." There is a clock on right wall; it has stopped at seventeen minutes after six. The furniture consists of four or five wooden benches with iron legs, the feet screwed to the floor; these benches are set in rigid rows, facing front; one straight behind the other. Upon the front one is seen a small lunch basket, closed but not strapped, and a very small thermos bottle. Several traveling bags, a couple of guns in cases and a trout-fishing outfit are there also.

The man with the lantern is the station-master, ticket-agent, telegraph operator, baggage-man, and janitor; but he wears no uniform except a cap. He is elderly and smooth-shaven; his clothes are elderly, too; though not shabby. A dark old overcoat with the collar turned up; his rubber boots are heavy with mudded clay, and his trousers are tucked into the tops of them.

He goes casually near the clock; looks at it; grunts thoughtfully; goes out right, returns with a plain, wooden-seated chair, once painted yellow; places it under the clock. He moves the hands around to ten-twenty-four, consulting his watch as he does so. Then he winds the clock.

As the winding begins, there is the sound of an annoyed yawn from the apparently empty benches. A man has been lying at full length on the bench second from front, and until now, as he slowly "sits up," has been invisible.

He is "somewhere in the early forties"—but not yet "well-preserved" looking. People of sixty would speak of him as "a young man"; people of sixteen would of course think him of an advanced age. He is urban, intelligent look-

ing—a "man of the world"; very "attractive." His clothes are of an imported texture, pleasant for travel, and he has on a soft hat and a lightweight overcoat.

The STATION-MASTER, having wound the clock, looks at him.

STATION-MASTER. (*Casually*) Been asleep, I expect. (*Gets down from chair.*)

AMES. (*Passing a gloved hand over his eyes*) I have not. (*He looks at the STATION-MASTER drowsily.*) You aren't the same one, are you. (*He states this as an interesting discovery; it is not a question.*)

STATION-MASTER. I'm not the same one *what*?

AMES. You aren't the same Station-Master that was here this afternoon.

STATION-MASTER. He ain't no Station-Master; he's my brother-in-law. (*Starts with chair.*)

AMES. Oh!

STATION-MASTER. He jes' *spelled* me to-day; I was teamin'.

AMES. I *thought* he seemed to be an amateur.

STATION-MASTER. (*Moving right with the chair to return it to the room off right*) How? (*He means, "What did you say?"*)

AMES. He seemed bashful. About giving any information, I mean.

STATION-MASTER. Information? He ain't got no infamation to *give*. Never *did* have.

AMES. He struck *me* in that light—particularly about trains.

STATION-MASTER. Well, right *to-night*, I ain't much better, myself. The wires are all down after them storms; the bridge at Millersville washed out on one road and they was a big freight smash on the other one. My brother-in-law says he told you *that* much.

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AMES. (*Gloomily*) Yes; he did tell me that much.

STATION-MASTER. Well, the Lord A'mighty couldn't tell you no more till them wires start work-in' again. (*He moves to go off right with the chair, then turns back.*) Where'd you say you was aimin' to git to?

AMES. Well, New York—eventually! (*Plaintively*) I have a place there with a bed in it—and food.

STATION-MASTER. (*Reflectively*) New York. You got to git from here down to Uticky first—then change for Albany.

AMES. (*Drearily*) Yes, I know, I know. I made a mistake in coming round by this junction. . . . I ought to have walked.

STATION-MASTER. (*With a short laugh*) I reckon! You'd a-got there pretty near as soon, mebbe. These here hurricanes—(*He means hurricanes*)—got train service in this whole section jest about disorganized. They say it's sun-spots—I dunno if 'tis or not, though. (*Exits right with his chair. AMES rises and goes to the window, he looks out toward left. After a moment he goes to the door up right, opens it. Steps just outside the door, but remains in view. Then speaks to someone invisible and apparently at a little distance off left.*)

AMES. (*Hesitating*) Ah—don't you think this is pretty foolish? (*He waits a moment for an answer. None is heard; he speaks louder.*) I say, I think this is—ah—don't you think, yourself, this is pretty foolish? Ah—I'm sure you can hear me, you know! (*He waits again.*) Ah—— (*He seems about to address further remarks to the invisible person; but decides not to do so, and with a somewhat baffled and puzzled air, comes in, closes the door, sits on first bench, murmuring rather crossly—*) Well, all right! (*Moves lunch basket a little center of bench. The*

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STATION-MASTER *returns from the room off right. He speaks as he enters.*)

STATION-MASTER. Nary a single click from my telegraph instament. (*He refers to room off right, then he comes over and looks at the luggage on the front bench.*) See you been gunnun. (*He means gunning.*)

AMES. What?

STATION-MASTER. See you been fishun and gunnun up in the woods.

AMES. Yes, I have been up at a lodge in the woods, that's how I happen to be here—getting out of the woods.

STATION-MASTER. (*Examining the guns*) Have any luck?

AMES. (*Abysmal*) No.

STATION-MASTER. If you'd a-shot anything or caught any fish you'd a-done well by yourself to bring it along; you c'd a-built a fire and cooked it, anyways.

AMES. (*Roused to earnestness*) See here; your brother-in-law told me there was absolutely *no food* in this neighborhood.

STATION-MASTER. He was right. They ain't.

AMES. But, my Lord, the people in this neighborhood have to live on *something*!

STATION-MASTER. Ain't no people in this neighborhood 'cept me and my brother-in-law's fam'lies.

AMES. Well, even you and your brother-in-law have to *eat*, don't you?

STATION-MASTER. My hens ain't layin'. (*Sits on front bench, center.*) We got jest three eggs in two days from seventeen hens.

AMES. (*Pessimistically*) I suppose you used all three eggs.

STATION-MASTER. (*With a dry laugh*) I s'pose we did, among seven children. We had nine potatoes left and about four slices o' bacon. That's all we

had fer supper, and we won't have no breakfast at all unless the north-bound train gits through. April's an awful scanty month in the country, and I expected supplies to-day myself. You ain't the only one them sun-spot's been foolin' with.

AMES. I suppose that's as good an explanation as any for a train over eleven hours late—sun-spots!

STATION-MASTER. (*Looking in the lunch basket*) Why, you got food here, right now. Good food!

AMES. One chicken sandwich and one hard-boiled egg; left over from a light lunch—a *very* light lunch.

STATION-MASTER. Well, why don't you eat it?

AMES. (*Shortly*) It isn't mine. (*Pushes basket to STATION-MASTER.*)

STATION-MASTER. (*Surprised*) Oh! (*He nods; glances up off left, and nods again, as if understanding.*) Well, waitin' fer trains does git people kind of pettish with each other. (*Rises and moves right. Glances off left.*) I noticed your wife's still a-settin' on that baggage-truck out yonder.

AMES. (*Shortly*) She isn't my wife!

STATION-MASTER. Oh! Your lady, I mean. She's still settin' out yonder, I see.

AMES. (*Rather bothered, shakes his head, mutters*) She isn't my lady. (*He gets up and goes to the window.*)

STATION-MASTER. Well, excuse me. My brother-in-law, he took her and you fer married. (*AMES comes down left.*) He told me you and her had kind of a spat, jest before he left here, this evenin'. But of course a man's got a right to quarrel with other women's well's his wife.

AMES. (*Slightly annoyed with himself for being annoyed by this report of the STATION-MASTER's brother-in-law*) The—ah—lady and I were hardly—ah—quarreling.

STATION-MASTER. (*Placatively*) To tell the truth . . . (*Crosses left.*) My brother-in-law ain't

hardly got sense enough to tell the difference between a couple that's quarrelin' and a couple that's jest kind of startin' to make *up* to each other like. (*Sits left end of front bench.*)

AMES. (*More annoyed*) This lady and I weren't doing either. I never saw her before I got on the train this morning.

STATION-MASTER. Well, that often happens. I've knowed plenty of perfectly respectable people to do it, too. You might say it's *nature*.

AMES. What is?

STATION-MASTER. Why, fer strange couples to git to talkin' to each other—and all *so* on—on a train.

AMES. (*Rather crossly*) I didn't speak to this lady on the train. (*He goes up left and comes right down again.*) In fact, we didn't speak to each other till we'd been moping about this God-forsaken station for an hour. Then, as there wasn't anything else in the world in sight but mud—and your brother-in-law—and she didn't need to guess very hard to guess I was hungry—she offered to share her lunch basket with me, and we naturally got to talking.

STATION-MASTER. Well, sir, a person can git mighty well acquainted with anybody in about ten hours' talkin'.

AMES. (*Crossly*) We haven't been talking for the *last* two hours.

STATION-MASTER. Got acquainted at noon and quit speakin' *already*! (*Rises. Chuckles.*)

AMES. Oh, no. She still speaks—at least she nodded to show that she heard me, the last time I spoke to *her*. (*He is grimly humorous here, but does not smile.*)

STATION-MASTER. Well, sir; it's funny, some people don't more'n say howdy-do. They can't neither of 'em hardly stand a word the other one says. (*Crosses right.*) I sh'd think she'd be *chilly* out there, by *this* time, though.

AMES. (*Looks at the STATION-MASTER earnestly*) You seem to be a man of unusual experience. (*Crosses center.*)

STATION-MASTER. Unusual? I guess if you think that, you ain't married.

AMES. (*Muttering*) No, and not likely to be.

STATION-MASTER. Look out, mister! No man in a spat with a lady ain't safe! Where's she bound fer?

AMES. I think she said a station about thirty or forty miles from here—Amity.

STATION-MASTER. Amity? She's worse off'n what you are!

AMES. No, that's impossible!

STATION-MASTER. Amity's on the branch line. *Everything's* blowed to hell down that way; creek's over the rails and all.

AMES. Isn't there any way of getting a motor car? (*Rises.*)

STATION-MASTER. Not with the telephone lines down like they are. I don't reckon no car could git through these roads, neither.

AMES. (*Gloomily*) Yes; so your brother-in-law said. (*A clicking is heard off right.*) Isn't that your telegraph instrument? (*Indicating right.*)

STATION-MASTER. (*Jumping up*) So 'tis. (*Going right.*) That means they got the wire up again at Logan's station. Well, now we'll see what's what, mebbe! (*Exits right, leaving the door open. The telegraph instrument can be heard clicking. AMES listens at the open door, right, a moment; then he goes to the door up right, opens it, and speaks off; as before.*)

AMES. I think you'd better come in now, Miss Stuart. (*In response, a thrillingly lovely voice is heard, though the words are not necessarily discernible. However, what MISS STUART says is, "I'm quite comfortable here, thank you."*) I really think

you'd better come in. There may be some news of your train—or mine! (*This seems to mean more to MISS STUART than have his previous appeals. Her voice is heard again, "Oh!" She is evidently approaching. AMES, seriously*) That's better. Do come in and be sensible. (*Her voice is heard once more before she appears. A faint amusement and protest are audible in it: "Sensible? My dear sir!" He holds the door open for her as she appears and comes down. Then he follows. She is of a lovely and charming presence; one is aware of that instantly though she is pretty thoroughly muffled in furs and veils; and one becomes even more aware of it as she pushes up the veil from her face as she comes in. A muff is held in her left hand.*)

MISS STUART. My dear sir, I think maybe I could be more sensible if the news turns out to be of my train. Could you stand its being about my train instead of yours, Mr. Ames? (*Comes down right. She has gone toward the lunch basket.*)

AMES. (*A little stiffly*) If mine came first you'd be relieved of me. (*At upper end of benches, left.*)

MISS STUART. Yes; so I should. (*She lifts the lid of the lunch basket, closed by the STATION-MASTER.*) Oh, you haven't eaten the sandwich—nor the egg either! (*As if in reproachful surprise.*)

AMES. (*Stiffly*) Certainly not. (*Comes down left.*)

MISS STUART. (*Lifting a hard-boiled egg from the basket daintily, in a gloved hand*) Didn't you even nibble at it? (*She looks at him, not at the egg.*)

AMES. (*Stiffly*) I did not.

MISS STUART. Are you sure?

AMES. (*Indignantly*) I'm not in the habit of "nibbling" things.

MISS STUART. (*With a hint of suspicion and severity*) You're sure? I knew a Bishop once who used to steal little bits of icing off icing cakes. He'd

slip out in the kitchen on baking days when no one was looking—and then he'd deny it!

AMES. (*Coldly, interrupting her*) I'm not a Bishop, please.

MISS STUART. (*Reasonably*) How could I tell? I've only known you—(*She glances at the clock*)—ten hours and thirty-some minutes, and this is the first time you've mentioned that you're not a Bishop. (*With an increase of severity.*) Why didn't you eat this egg?

AMES. (*Coldly*) You know perfectly well why I didn't.

MISS STUART. But I thought you *would*, if I left you alone with it. I've left you alone with it on purpose—two hours. I'm afraid you're stubborn.

AMES. *More personalities?*

MISS STUART. Well, doesn't a question of what one eats *have* to be rather personal?

AMES. I think you *made* it personal when you lost your temper.

MISS STUART. (*Interrupting*) When I lost *my* temper? Oh, oh!

AMES. But you did! (*Coming toward her.*) You lost your temper and declined to sit in the same room with me. Rather than do that you went out in the night air and sat two hours on a baggage truck! (*Turns away to left.*)

MISS STUART. (*Hurriedly*) Please listen, Mr. Ames—your name is Ames, isn't it? (*There is a stronger hint of humor in her voice.*)

AMES. You seemed to have no doubt of it before you lost your—

MISS STUART. (*Interrupting*) Mr. Ames, let's put it this way: I lost—*your* temper; as for *me*, it seems at least you ought to distinguish between a loss of temper and a sense of injury.

AMES. (*Quickly*) Yes, I had the sense of injury.

MISS STUART. When we found there was only

one egg and one sandwich left for *dinner*, and no other food in reach, I said——

AMES. (*Interrupting*) You distinctly said it wouldn't be enough for *two*.

MISS STUART. Yes. That's what I "distinctly" said. It really isn't enough for *one*, is it?

AMES. Need I explain again, I had no intention of asking to share it with you?

MISS STUART. No. *Don't* explain again. When I said there wasn't enough for two I meant——

AMES. (*Interrupting*) It was yours, and you meant you wanted it all, naturally.

MISS STUART. (*Indignant!y*) Oh!

AMES. What I minded was your thinking I *expected* any of it.

MISS STUART. When I said there wasn't enough for two I meant I expected to eat *all* of it, did I?

AMES. Why, of course.

MISS STUART. (*After drawing an indignant breath—puts egg in basket*) Now, before I go out for two hours more on the baggage-truck, will you please ask that man if there is any news of my train?

AMES. (*Stiffly*) Certainly.

MISS STUART. Thank you.

AMES. Don't mention it. (*Goes to door, right, and speaks off.*) What do they wire you about——

STATION-MASTER. (*Voice off right*) Nothin' yet about *no* passenger traffic.

AMES. (*Turning toward* MISS STUART) He says there's nothing yet.

MISS STUART. (*Sinking upon the front bench*) Oh! (*She sighs with exasperation, sits on front bench.*) You said there was news.

AMES. There will be in a few minutes, now the wire's working.

MISS STUART. Well, do you still pretend not to understand?

AMES. Understand what? (*Comes down right.*)

MISS STUART. That of *course* I meant men need more sustenance than women, and of *course* when I said there wasn't enough food for two I meant I didn't want *any*—that is, I did *want* it, certainly, but I wouldn't touch it because—because you're a man and *ought*—to have it *all*.

AMES. (*In an earnestly interested voice*) Do you honestly mean that? (*He sits on the bench, right of MISS STUART, looking at her with great earnestness.*)

MISS STUART. Why, of course.

AMES. Are you serious?

MISS STUART. Why, of *course* I'm serious.

AMES. You really wanted me to eat it *all*?

MISS STUART. Certainly.

AMES. (*Remorsefully*) I thought you were warning me your hospitality was over when it came to one egg and one sandwich.

MISS STUART. (*Glancing at the clock*) Ten hours and thirty-seven minutes. You certainly ought to know me well enough to understand better than that!

AMES. You honestly mean I ought to eat it all because I'm a man?

MISS STUART. Of course. It hurts a man a great deal more not to indulge himself than it does a woman. When there's only a little of anything, it ought always to be given to the man.

AMES. Because he's the more selfish?

MISS STUART. No. Because he *has* to have his strength. A woman can live "on her nerves."

AMES. So you think the woman *ought* to give up the food to the man? (*This is serious on his part, and appears to be serious on hers; though one cannot always be sure when she is serious. There is a mysteriousness about her; we won't really know her for a considerable time.*)

MISS STUART. I think she'd better. If she didn't she might be mistreated!

AMES. (*Frowning*) So! Her unselfishness is only self-preservation, is it?

MISS STUART. (*With a twinkle*) No. She wants to preserve them both. If the Indians come the man will have to do most of the fighting; if the waters rise he'll have to build a raft. If it gets *very* chilly—(*She glances at the stove*)—he'll have to build a fire.

AMES. (*Following her glance*) It is very chilly. I wonder—— (*He rises and goes to the door right, calls off*) How about a fire in that stove?

STATION-MASTER. (*Off right*) It's fixed, if you want to light it.

AMES. All right. (*He crosses to the stove, producing a match which he lights and places within the door of the stove. In a moment a rosy glow comes from the door of the stove, which opens toward the right. He watches it and the lady inscrutably watches him.*)

MISS STUART. It is a new experience. (*She loosens her furs as the glow grows stronger from the stove.*)

AMES. My lighting a fire for you?

MISS STUART. (*Indicating the lunch basket*) No. To see a man making such a fuss about eating when he's starving.

AMES. (*Returning to her, he smiles*) Suppose we divide it?

MISS STUART. You might have thought of that before.

AMES. I might? Why, it was you that said——

MISS STUART. Have you a pocket-knife—with a very clean blade? (*He hands his knife to her with a blade open.*) Yes, I thought you looked like a man who would have. I'll do the dividing, and you'll do the choosing—— (*He sits end of bench. She cuts the egg so that the two parts are anything but equal; the smaller part is about a fifth of the egg. She cuts*

the sandwich in the same uneven way.) There. Choose.

AMES. Thanks. *(He takes the small bit of egg and the tiny fragment of the sandwich.)*

MISS STUART. Well, eat them. *(He does so. His portions vanish as if hardly realized as they pass. Meanwhile she is cutting the egg and the sandwich again.)*

AMES. *(As he swallows the two small bits together)* Thanks. Aren't you——

MISS STUART. Oh, yes, I'm only—— *(She offers the newly divided portions.)* Here.

AMES. Oh, no. I've had my share.

MISS STUART. *(Laughing a little)* That was a test to see how you'd choose. Now it's a fair division.

AMES. No. I really—— *(He takes off his overcoat and sits on the bench, near her.)*

MISS STUART. Don't let's be ridiculous any more. I imagine *neither* of us has much right to behave like a child of ten—or nineteen, for that matter. Here! *(She insists upon his taking what she offers.)*

AMES. It doesn't seem fair. *(He accepts what is offered and eats.)* Murder, but I am hungry!

MISS STUART. And there's still come coffee in the thermos. Didn't you know it? *(She pours it in the cap-cup of the bottle as she speaks, turning the bottle upside down to get the last.)*

AMES. No! Is there some coffee left? My, my! *(She puts the cup in his hand.)* Coffee!

MISS STUART. Yes, that is lucky. *(She puts the remaining bit of egg upon the remaining bit of sandwich.)* Here, this is yours, too, to go with the coffee. Eat it! *(He does so before he thinks.)* That's it!

AMES. Oh, lovely! A whole mouthful at once! *(He finishes the coffee in a gulp; then starts.)* That was yours! *(Rises.)*

MISS STUART. No, no, it wasn't.

AMES. Why, it was! (*He goes back of bench to center.*) Have you given me all the coffee, too? (*He shakes the thermos bottle and turns it upside down.*) Well, by George! Did you do that to escape mistreatment?

MISS STUART. No. It was just the way I was brought up. (*Goes left and throws paper napkins, etc., into stove.*)

AMES. You were brought up to make a man be selfish?

MISS STUART. About food and when he thinks he's sick, yes. That was the old-fashioned way of bringing girls up, wasn't it?

AMES. I thought that went out a long time ago.

MISS STUART. It prevailed in my girlhood, you see.

AMES. (*Seriously, quickly*) Well, that couldn't have been very long ago.

MISS STUART. (*Putting the thermos bottle in the basket and closing the lid, she smiles faintly.*) No? Hasn't the Station-Master any news for us yet?

(*The STATION-MASTER answers for himself. Enters right as she speaks, carrying his lantern and a bucket of coal. Goes left, back of benches, and down to stove.*)

STATION-MASTER. Not very good, I reckon. . . . Least not as you'd think. You won't git no train fer Amity to-night.

MISS STUART. (*Disturbed, but she has usually somewhere a little humor left for her own misfortune.*) Not to-night!

STATION-MASTER. No'm; an' so fur as I know, not before noon, or mebbe three—four—five o'clock in the afternoon to-morrow.

MISS STUART. (*Weakly*) Will there be any food in it is part of America to-morrow?

STATION-MASTER. (*Pouring some coal into the stove*) Not as I know of now.

MISS STUART. Good gracious!

AMES. (*Huskily*) How about *my* train?

STATION-MASTER. Number Twenty-one? If she don't git no later she'll be due by eight or nine in the morning.

AMES (*Quickly*) Is there a diner on her?

STATION-MASTER. On Number Twenty-one? A diner? My gosh! (*He sets the coal bucket down by the stove with a bang, and puts shovel full of coal in stove.*)

AMES. Isn't there a buffet?

STATION-MASTER. Mister, they's a caboose; that's all.

AMES. *Oh, my!*

STATION-MASTER. (*Buttoning his overcoat and moving toward right*) They's more coal in yonder, if you need it.

MISS STUART. (*Looking at him incredulously*) Where are you *going*? (*She jumps up, continuing instantly*) Mr. Ames, you'd better ask him where he's going.

STATION-MASTER. (*Easily*) Me? Why, you ast me yourself. Where you think I'm goin'? I'm goin' home to bed.

MISS STUART. (*Gravely, quickly*) You are? (*Rises.*)

STATION-MASTER. Yes'm. I got to sleep same as anybody.

AMES. What? Why, you *can't!*

STATION-MASTER. Why, *I* ain't got anything more to do around here till jest before Twenty-one's due. (*Then, reassuringly*) I'll be back by seven-thirty in the morning, though.

AMES. But this *lady*—where's she going to *sleep*?

STATION-MASTER. (*Disclaiming responsibility*) I couldn't tell you.

AMES. What about your house? Can't she . . .

STATION-MASTER. (*Looking at Miss STUART*)
In the first place, how would she git through the mud?
(*Shows his boots, dried mud to the knee.*)

AMES. Why—why, we could take her on the
baggage-truck. (*This, he thinks, is a real idea.*)

MISS STUART. (*Graciously*) No, thank you.

STATION-MASTER. No room for her if she got
there. No way to *make* none, either.

AMES. What about your brother-in-law's house?

STATION-MASTER. 'Bout same as me. Him and
his wife and two childern's in one room and the
other five childern's in the other.

MISS STUART. No, thank you.

AMES. Well, but good heavens . . .

MISS STUART. (*Soothingly*) Never mind. It's
all right.

AMES. (*Turning back to the STATION-MASTER*)
Well, but look *here*—

STATION-MASTER. Mister, you can make yourself
comfatble enough; it's nice and warm here now; and
night-duty when they ain't no trains runnin', why
that ain't part o' my job. I got a heavy day to-mor-
row, and I need sleep. *Good night, lady!* (*He goes
out briskly up right. Miss STUART goes to stove,
left.*)

AMES. Well, good heavens— (*He goes up
nervously, opens the door, steps out and calls after
the STATION-MASTER.*) Listen—you! See *here!*

STATION-MASTER. (*Outside*) Good night!

AMES. But see *here*— (*There is no response,
and after a few moments AMES closes the door, much
disturbed. Miss STUART stands near the stove, ob-
serves him; then laughs faintly.*)

MISS STUART. Don't worry about me; I'm an old
traveler. We can be comfortable enough; it is
warm now!

AMES. I'll—I'll go take a nap—later—on the baggage-truck. (*Jerks his head toward up left.*)

MISS STUART. How absurd! I nearly froze out there, even in these. (*Her furs.*)

AMES. (*Almost pathetically*) But what's to be done?

MISS STUART. Nothing. When railroads break down passengers can't travel, can they?

AMES. I ought to be able to think of something to do. (*Comes down right.*)

MISS STUART. Well, for one thing, now that all the officials have gone, I don't think you need to bother about that sign any longer. (*She points to "No Smoking."*) Don't you usually smoke—after dinner? (*She laughs on the word "dinner" with a glance at the lunch basket, and then sits again, throwing back her fur coat.*)

AMES. (*A little awkwardly*) Oh, thanks. (*Comes down right. He brings forth a cigarette-case.*) But that won't be of much use, will it?

MISS STUART. Well, what else *useful* can you think of?

AMES. I can't think of a thing.

MISS STUART. Neither can I. So—(*She laughs faintly, crosses to left center, and sits on front bench*)—so where are your matches?

AMES. (*Produces a box of matches, then makes a gesture as if to offer her his cigarette-case*) Ah—do you—?

MISS STUART. (*Shaking her head*) No; I still stick to the way I was brought up. (*She takes off her heavy coat. Not rising.*)

AMES. (*Seriously*) No! Is there still an old-fashioned woman left in America?

MISS STUART. Yes. "Left" is the word. Left over!

AMES. How "left over"?

MISS STUART. Old maids *are*, aren't they?

AMES. Old bachelors are! That's what *I* am. (*Lights his cigarette, adding grimly*) An old bachelor, and perhaps an older one than I look, too! A *little*, that is.

MISS STUART. (*Wistfully*) What's it matter how many times you've seen the earth go round the sun? That's all we mean when we say "a year," isn't it? Our ages ought to be reckoned another way; not in these foolish "years."

AMES. What other way do you suggest?

MISS STUART. Well, let's call a man as old as he behaves—toward a woman!

AMES. Then how old will you call a woman?

MISS STUART. As old as she makes men behave toward her.

AMES. (*With a little laugh*) Well, if *I'm* as old as I behave now-a-days toward women, I'm dead.

MISS STUART. (*Smiling*) But what's the *matter* with the women you know?

AMES. (*Laughs ruefully, and walks about as he speaks*) Well, most of those I *did* know are so married and raising children I hardly ever see 'em at all. And I just can't stand the new generation.

MISS STUART. (*Thoughtfully*) Yes—there is a new American girl. I've got one myself.

AMES. (*Staring*) You have?

MISS STUART. I'm bringing up an orphan niece—or she's bringing me up; it's hard to say which. In fact, I'm bringing up two orphan nieces. (*She smiles at a thought.*) Only one of 'em belongs to the new generation, though. You don't like these new young things, then?

AMES. Great Lord, no! They smoke and drink and wear men's clothes and short hair—

MISS STUART. Well, boys' clothes are better for the outdoor things they *do* nowadays, aren't they?

AMES. That may be, but they've given up a great thing to get this new *liberty* I hear they talk about.

MISS STUART. What great thing did they give up?

AMES. (*Emphatically*) Charm!

MISS STUART. You haven't met a charming one?

AMES. There *aren't* any. How can a brazen little hussy in breeches with a flask of home-made gin in her hip pocket have any *charm*?

MISS STUART. Ah—but she can, because she has youth, and youth is charm. *Don't* you *care* for the youth you see in a young girl?

AMES. (*Sitting down by her*) I'll tell you what I care for. I care for the *graces* I *used* to see in the girls I grew up with.

MISS STUART. You're sure it wasn't really their youth that *gave* them the graces?

AMES. I can *show* you what I care for! (*Very earnestly and decisively.*) To-morrow we'll be moving miles and miles apart. . . .

MISS STUART. Will we? I'm afraid you think more of this railroad system than I do.

AMES. I'm serious. Probably after to-morrow morning we'll never see each other again.

MISS STUART. Why, I feel as if you were my most intimate friend! Life-long! After we finished Italy, wasn't it *two* hours you talked about religion?

AMES. What I'm trying to *show* you——

MISS STUART. Yes; I forgot.

AMES. I had a temptation to tell you something that *would* show you.

MISS STUART. (*Gaily*) Why, you could tell me anything. I couldn't stop you. (*Her gesture indicates the surrounding isolation.*)

AMES. Then I will. I'll tell you what I thought about you when I got on that little junk-line train this morning. I hadn't expected to see anybody looking like *you* getting on at one of these way stations——

MISS STUART. I'm a farmer, you know. I have a farm down near Amity. I've been away to see

about a new tenant for part of the land! (*Then abruptly*) Oh, I don't mean to stop you! Go on!

AMES. When you got on the train I thought: "There! There's a lady!" When these *new-generation* girls get on a train I usually think: "There! There's a rowdy!"

MISS STUART. You must have met some strange ones!

AMES. I haven't *met any*. Just hearing and looking at 'em's enough for *me*! But when I looked at you—well, I'm going to talk as sentimentally as I *feel*, just for once in my life—when I looked at you I caught a—a perfume of sweeter days—yes, *better* days than this! And I'll go ahead, now I'm started; I'm hungry as a bear, in spite of your giving me all your lunch, and I *did* feel really cross, during our quarrel, but I'm glad the sun-spots—*he* thought it was the sun-spots—I'm *glad* they've given me this chance to know you.

MISS STUART. My dear man, you don't know an earthly thing about me!

AMES. Oh, yes, I do. There are some people you know all about in a little while.

MISS STUART. "All about?" Good gracious!

AMES. No; not all. You don't know all the *lovely* things about 'em, but you do know there aren't any things that *aren't* lovely; you're one of those transparently perfect things, Miss Stuart.

MISS STUART. What?

AMES. (*Rises and goes a little to the right*) You are. And that's all there is to it!

MISS STUART. And only to think of it!

AMES. (*Turning to her, rather sharply*) To think of what?

MISS STUART. So much praise—bought by one hard-boiled egg and a sandwich!

AMES. (*Rather brusquely*) Well, some of it is for that, if you want to know it! It seemed a little

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thing; but it showed that when you were hungry yourself you'd force your last bit of food on a stranger.

MISS STUART. A "stranger"? Why, by this time I know you *better* than I do my most intimate friend, Mr. Ames!

AMES. (*Sits. Then pacing up and down and going on with his thought*) I kept looking at you on the train, though you didn't know it——

MISS STUART. I was brought up always not to know it.

AMES. (*Continuing*) I kept looking at you, and I——

MISS STUART. (*Quoting him*) "I said to myself, 'There's a woman I'd hate to be cast away in a desert junction with!'"

AMES. I said to myself, "There's the first woman I've seen in a long time I'd like to know!"

MISS STUART. *How long a time?*

AMES. Well, since this *new* type came in.

MISS STUART. (*Thoughtfully*) I'm afraid you wouldn't approve of my niece!

AMES. If *you're* bringing her up I don't believe she'd be the new type.

MISS STUART. Oh, yes, she is! It doesn't matter *who* brings 'em up; they get it from one another.

AMES. Well, let's forget the new type just now.

MISS STUART. (*Smiling*) All right.

AMES. I'd rather keep to what I feel about you.

MISS STUART. (*Nodding smilingly*) Well, *keep* to it—it began promisingly.

AMES. (*Coming toward her a little way*) I will. I'll speak out! As a man gets older most of his friends marry off—or they die off—it's the same thing so far as *he's* concerned!

MISS STUART. (*Gravely*) Yes; I know it is!

AMES. Well, a man gets pretty lonely.

MISS STUART. *Men* always seem to think that's so singular!

AMES. (*Quietly*) All I meant to say is—(*She yawns*)—it's been a great thing for me to have a woman's companionship for a day.

MISS STUART. Well, it still seems to be going on.

AMES. I wish . . .

MISS STUART. Yes? (*She conceals a yawn by turning away quickly. She doesn't wish to yawn. She is interested; but she is beginning to be really threatened by drowsiness. He does not perceive this, and the symptoms are, so far, very slight.*)

AMES. (*Thoughtfully*) Of course you don't know anything about me—except to-day—

MISS STUART. I do, a little.

AMES. (*Surprised*) How?

MISS STUART. Why, you said your name was William Ames: I supposed you were the William Berry Ames that the papers say is so remarkable. "Remarkable's" the word they always use.

AMES. (*Frowning*) I'm not much in newspapers—and isn't it obvious I'm not remarkable?

MISS STUART. Oh, yes; I've seen it any number of times: "Mr. William Berry Ames, *still* playing remarkable polo."

AMES. (*Sharply*) That's my *uncle*! (*Rises.*) It's "*still* remarkable that he plays polo at *sixty-six*!" "Remarkable" because he's sixty-six! They always use the word remarkable about elderly people. And you thought . . .

MISS STUART. (*A little disturbed, hastily*) I'm so sorry!

AMES. (*Somewhat upset*) You thought I was that old man!

MISS STUART. (*Quickly*) Oh, I never heard he was quite sixty-six.

AMES. So! You didn't see how I could be quite sixty-six!

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MISS STUART. (*Hastily, with apparent seriousness in placating him*) But wouldn't it be wonderful if you were! To be sixty-six and look only—

AMES. (*Interrupting*) What age do I look?

MISS STUART. Ah, let's not go into that. It might become mutual!

AMES. I can't get over it; you thought I was my uncle!

MISS STUART. You must tell him about it. And then tell me sometime if it upsets him too.

AMES. (*Mollified; his tone changes*) "Sometime." You think we *might* see each other again after tomorrow?

MISS STUART. Why not, if you think it would be pleasant? I should be— (*She is caught by a yawn and conceals it imperfectly.*) I should be—very glad—

AMES. (*Sadly*) Oh, you're sleepy.

MISS STUART. I'm not. I'm interested. I'm interested in everything you've been saying. I was never more interested in my life.

AMES. Honestly? (*Sits.*)

MISS STUART. At least, it's been quite a time since I've had as cheering things said to me as you've been saying. I like it.

AMES. Could you stand some more?

MISS STUART. I—think so.

AMES. Then, *do* let me see you again after tomorrow, will you?

MISS STUART. (*After a moment*) Yes.

AMES. Could I come to Amity to see you—some-time?

MISS STUART. Why, I think so.

AMES. Could I come—before long?

MISS STUART. If—you like.

AMES. (*Husily, gravely, quickly*) I think I should like it more than I've ever liked anything in my life.

MISS STUART. (*Rather startled*) Why, that's—that's saying quite a great deal—isn't it?

AMES. I can't help it. It's the way I feel.

MISS STUART. Yes, but at these pleasant quieter years you say you have arrived at—haven't you learned more caution?

AMES. More caution than what?

MISS STUART. Than to say quite so much as you just did—and to an unknown woman!

AMES. (*Quickly, with feeling that increases*) I tell you you're not unknown. You've shown me—yes, just in the way you *fed* me, if you like—yes, and in the dear, pretty way you took this being “cast away” with me here, you've shown me you *are* the old-fashioned, *perfect* kind of woman—I thought had disappeared. Well, I've found you—I don't want to let you go! My life has been getting so confoundedly lonely—I—well, why not?

MISS STUART. (*Gently*) I don't know—you're a *little* indefinite, perhaps?

AMES. It's a long time since I felt like this—and the reason I'm lonely's because fifteen or so years ago I didn't *spea*k when something like this came over me. Instead, I went away to think it over, and another man spoke first.

MISS STUART. (*With a humor that fights with drowsiness and an inclination to take him seriously*) You needn't be afraid of that now. Farming means a very retired life, with me. No one else will “speak” while you retire to think it over. (*She closes her eyes for a moment.*)

AMES. I don't want to think it over at all! Listen. Do I seem to you the sort of man you could like pretty well?

MISS STUART. (*Looking up quickly*) Oh, I think so. (*She closes her eyes for a moment again.*)

AMES. (*So impulsively as to be almost explosive*)

Well, if you'll let me hope something might come of it, I'll be any kind of man you *want* me to be!

MISS STUART. (*Opening her eyes quickly*) Aren't you a little susceptible, Mr. Ames?

AMES. Does it look like it; to still be a bachelor at my age?

MISS STUART. But it struck me you were—almost—proposing to me just then.

AMES. (*With great feeling*) Well, I was. I *am*!

MISS STUART. Almost.

AMES. Almost or quite—just as you like, Miss Stuart.

MISS STUART. (*Smiling a little*) Perhaps it had better be “almost.”

AMES. (*With feeling*) If it's to be that way—almost a proposal—is there any chance of your—almost—thinking of it?

MISS STUART. (*Gently and smiling*) Why—I might *almost*—think of it—sometime. (*Again the symptoms of drowsiness overtake her.*)

AMES. (*Remorsefully*) You *are* sleepy!

MISS STUART. (*With feeble insistence*) I'm not!

AMES. (*Ruefully humorous, rising*) I ought to be ashamed trying to keep you awake with a proposal of marriage! (*As he speaks he places a satchel on the end of bench and rolls his overcoat over it for a pillow.*)

MISS STUART. Was that all you made it for—to keep me awake?

AMES. You know better. Here; lie down. I'll cover you over.

MISS STUART. I won't take your overcoat. You'll need it. The satchel's a good enough pillow.

AMES. No. It isn't. Lie down.

MISS STUART. Take your overcoat away or I'll sit up all night. I will take it away.

AMES. (*Submitting*) All right.

MISS STUART. When you lie down yourself, put your overcoat over you. Will you?

AMES. If I need it.

MISS STUART. (*In a matter-of-fact voice*) No. Promise me.

AMES. I will.

MISS STUART. (*Lying down with her cheek against the satchel*) Ah, that's—ah! (*She sighs with satisfaction.*)

AMES. (*Gently covers her over with her fur coat and stole. Then he discovers her muff.*) Here. This is a better pillow. (*He places it under her head.*)

MISS STUART. Thank you. You're very kind. (*She is silent; then says sleepily*) I knew you were.

AMES. Knew I was what?

MISS STUART. (*Contentedly*) Kind.

AMES. (*Muttering*) Who wouldn't be? (*He goes to the stove.*)

MISS STUART. (*With her eyes shut*) I had to be up at four o'clock and drive seventeen miles to get my train. I'd rather stay awake and listen to you—you'll forgive me for being—so sleepy—won't you? (*AMES turns the damper on stove.*)

AMES. (*Smiling, as he looks round*) Yes. I'll forgive you! (*He takes his overcoat and spreads it on the second bench; puts a "suitcase" for a pillow.*)

MISS STUART. (*In a sweet, drowsy voice, with her eyes closed*) It certainly didn't seem—appreciative—going almost to sleep—when you were almost proposing—but I do appreciate it—very much—

AMES. (*With feeling*) You dear thing! I wasn't "almost proposing." I was *all* proposing and you know it.

MISS STUART. Well, it's very nice of you. I think I'm glad—you were. But—

AMES. But what?

MISS STUART. We don't need the light, do we?
If you leave the stove door open——

AMES. *(Goes up and snaps off the switch)* There!
*(A rosy glow from the stove door crosses the benches,
falling upon the recumbent lady.)*

MISS STUART. *(Cosily)* There. That's better.
(AMES goes to the second bench.) You'll put your
overcoat over you?

AMES. Yes.

MISS STUART. What have you got for a pillow?

AMES. It's all right.

MISS STUART. A suitcase?

AMES. It's plenty. *(MISS STUART, without opening her eyes or lifting her head, pulls the muff from beneath her cheek and lets her cheek rest on the satchel. Then, not otherwise moving, she swings the muff behind her to him.)*

AMES. What's that for?

MISS STUART. Your pillow. Take it.

AMES. I won't.

MISS STUART. You will.

AMES. Of course I won't.

MISS STUART. *(Gently and confidently)* You will.

AMES. You do make me selfish. *(He takes the pillow, places it, and sits on the second bench, preparing to lie down and pull his overcoat over him.)*

MISS STUART. *(In a very sleepy murmur)* I'm sorry I thought you were your uncle. *(She is lying on her right side, and she lifts her left hand over the back of the bench to him, the rest of her not moving. He takes it reverently, kisses it lightly; she brings the hand back and puts it under her cheek. She speaks disjointedly and very drowsily.)* I only thought so because the papers said he was so remarkable.

AMES. *(Gently)* I don't mind that now. *(Lies down on second bench.)*

MISS STUART. It would be too bad if you met

some pretty, very young thing after—after it was too late. Most men care more for early youth than they do for— (*A little yawn interrupts her.*)

AMES. (*Gently*) Than they do for what?

MISS STUART. Than they do for anything. Is the muff all right for a pillow?

AMES. (*Gently*) I never had such a pillow before.

MISS STUART. Aren't you sleepy, too?

AMES. Yes; the truth is, I am. It seems strange, when I feel so much that's *new* to me—to be sleepy—

MISS STUART. Oh, no. We *aren't* a young couple at a college dance—getting engaged.

AMES. No—of course not; but aren't we—almost— (*Rises and looks at her over the back of bench.*)

MISS STUART. I think—you must go to sleep now.

AMES. Yes, I will. (*He stretches himself on the bench.*)

MISS STUART. Are you at all—sure?

AMES. Yes, I am.

MISS STUART. I know what I say *sounds* very sleepy, and I *am* almost asleep, but my *mind*, you know—

AMES. Yes?

MISS STUART. (*More sleepily than ever*) My *mind's* working just as clearly as ever, and I keep thinking you've said all this—so suddenly—perhaps you *are* a little susceptible—perhaps when you see some pretty young thing—you'll—you'll—

AMES. (*Decisively*) No, I won't.

MISS STUART. (*Dreamily, in a soft, almost contented voice, and smiling a little*) Perhaps not.

AMES. May I say just one last thing to you? It seems foolish—but it would be pretty lovely to me if you'd let me say it.

MISS STUART. Say what?

AMES. May I say to you, "Good night, dear"?

MISS STUART. I believe you might. Say it.

AMES. (*Gently*) Good night, dear. (*Her left hand goes up again, his own hand is seen above the back of the bench, clasping it; then she returns it to her cheek.*)

MISS STUART. Good night, dear. (*There is quiet.*)

(*The Act Drop descends for a few seconds, and rises. Everything is as it was, except that the rosy glow from the stove has paled, and a gray light shows outside the window. The clock marks five-forty-five. The light outside the window grows a little stronger; distant trees just coming into new leaf on muddy hills are revealed there—an April landscape. The light continually grows stronger throughout the whole scene. A girl's voice is barely heard, shouting in the distance, "Hello, there!" "Hell-ooo, there!" Then, after a pause, a stamping is heard on the platform outside, as though someone stamped mud from his shoes. A quick, sharp tread is heard; the knob of the door up right is fumbled—then the door is opened and a girl of nineteen enters. She is distractingly pretty, in spite of—or it may be partly because of—her general style and costume. She wears a soft "sport" hat, beneath which her thick "bobbed" hair is additionally coquettish. She has on a short overcoat, knickerbockers, green stockings and high-laced shoes; the latter covered with mud which has also splashed her stockings. She comes in briskly and goes down left, then halts short with a breathed exclamation as she sees the two sleepers. "Well, for the love o' Mike!" This is in a husky whisper. She stares. A light snoring comes from the second bench. She looks long at the first bench, smiles; then controls a tendency to laughter. Then she moves back to*

the second bench and looks at AMES. After this contemplation she speaks again in the husky whisper: "Pretty good-lookin' ole bird, if you do snore!" The snoring stops with a little snort. AMES coughs, waking himself. Suddenly he sits up, dazed, and stares at the girl. She chokes down an increasing tendency to mirth during their scene.)

AMES. (*Confused*) Oh—ah, how d'ya do!

THE GIRL (FLORENCE). Sh! Don't wake Aunt Isabel. (*After this they both speak in husky whispers.*)

AMES. Who?

THE GIRL. My aunt. (*She gestures widely to MISS STUART.*) My Aunt Isabel! Don't you know her?

AMES. (*Rises and looks at MISS STUART*) Yes, indeed!

THE GIRL. Well, I should think so! I'm her niece, Florence.

AMES. (*Conventionally, but in a whisper*) I'm glad to uh—— (*Shakes hands.*)

FLORENCE. A man and I've been all night tryin' to get here in a car. He's back in the woods with it now, tryin' to get it out of a mud-hole. We've had a hell of a night!

AMES. I beg your pardon?

FLORENCE. It really was. Are you an old friend of hers?

AMES. I—hope to be. (*Rubbing his face and eyes with his hands.*)

FLORENCE. We'll take you with us when he gets the car out of the mud. No use to wake *her* up till it comes.

AMES. No. It's cold, isn't it?

FLORENCE. (*Pointing to the stove*) You might make the fire up if you can do it without waking her.

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AMES. I only need to turn the draft. I got up about two o'clock and put on some coal.

FLORENCE. (*As he moves toward the stove*) Cigarette?

AMES. What?

FLORENCE. Got a cigarette?

AMES. Oh! (*He hands her his case; she takes one.*)

FLORENCE. Light? (*He lights a match and holds it for her. She smiles at him with brazen coquetry, her hand on his as she lights the cigarette from the match.*) She makes a fuss about my smoking. Don't tell her, will you? (*She smiles again, her face not far from his; he looks thoughtful.*)

AMES. No. (*The fire begins to pick up. FLORENCE turns to AMES suddenly.*)

FLORENCE. How long you known her?

AMES. What?

FLORENCE. (*Emphasizing her whisper*) How long have you known my Aunt Isabel?

AMES. Yesterday!

FLORENCE. (*She is suddenly overcome with mirth. She lifts both hands in a gesture of "Oh, go 'way!" and choking with laughter, slaps him with her two palms upon the shoulders. She is unable to control herself; she convulses, leaning against him, then clapping both hands over her mouth, runs spluttering to up right. At the door she checks herself, speaks back to him huskily*) I'll see if he's got the car out the mud! (*Laughter breaks from her as she runs out of the door, up right.*)

(AMES is bothered and a little fascinated. He glances at ISABEL, then goes slowly to the door up right; looks out. He comes down; goes near the stove and stands, frowning thoughtfully. ISABEL murmurs, she opens her eyes; they fall upon AMES

without expression. Then she smiles slowly and speaks.)

ISABEL. I'm awake.

AMES. (*Starts*) Good morning!

ISABEL. Good morning. What time is it?

AMES. It's daylight. Did you—ah—sleep well?

ISABEL. Yes. Did you?

AMES. Yes. I did.

ISABEL. I was trying to stay asleep, but I thought
— Was the Station-Master here just now?

AMES. No; it was your niece.

ISABEL. What? (*She stretches her hand to him; he comes quickly and takes her hand. She rises.*)
You don't mean it!

AMES. Somehow she found you were here. She's been all night trying to get a car here, she said.

ISABEL. Why, the dear thing! Where'd she go?

AMES. (*Moving toward the door up right with her*) She went to see if— (*The door is flung open by FLORENCE, returning.*)

FLORENCE. It's coming! (*Comes down right.*)

ISABEL. Florence! How'd you find me? (*They go to each other and embrace.*)

FLORENCE. We telephoned all over the world, where the wires weren't down, and this was the only place you *could* be!

ISABEL. Florence, this is Mr. Ames.

FLORENCE. (*Gaily*) Right-o! We've had *quite* a chat! We'd better take him home with us, hadn't we? (*Goes back of first bench to center.*)

ISABEL. (*Turning to AMES with a little tremulous self-consciousness at which she smiles herself*) Will you?

AMES. (*Embarrassed*) Ah—you're very kind—I—

FLORENCE. (*Breezily*) Why, of *course* we're not going to leave you *here*! It's only a forty-mile drive

and we won't get stuck by daylight. You'll never see breakfast in *this* hole!

AMES. Well, as you're so kind——

FLORENCE. Of *course* you're coming! *We'll make* him, won't we, Aunt Isabel?

ISABEL. (*A little coldly*) I hope so.

AMES. (*Awkwardly, to FLORENCE*) Well, since you're so hospitable——

FLORENCE. (*She slaps him on shoulder*) Hospitable nothing! We don't see a new man-person twice a year in our neck o' the woods, except Johnnie White, and we're *used* to him! I made the poor kid drive me, Aunt Isabel. (*She runs to the door and calls out, "Yay, Johnnie!"*)

ISABEL. "Brazen hussies in boys' breeches"—— wasn't that what you called them?

AMES. (*Nervously*) Oh, but she's different—— she's *your niece*——

ISABEL. Yes, my *great-niece*.

AMES. What? I beg your pardon——

ISABEL. (*Calmly*) I forgot to tell you, she *isn't* my niece precisely——she's my *great-niece*. Florence's father wasn't——

AMES. (*Rather dazed, but trying to conceal it*) Your——she's your *great-niece*? Oh, yes—— (*A young man appears in the doorway with FLORENCE. FLORENCE enters first and goes back of first bench to center, looking at AMES.*)

ISABEL. Come in, Johnnie! (*He does so. He is a boy of about twenty, dressed for motoring and heavily stained with mud and grease; he carries a woman's fur coat over his arm. He smiles vaguely as he comes to take ISABEL's hand. She goes on*) It was lovely of you to drive all night through the mud to find me.

JOHNNIE. (*Grinning vaguely*) Well, Florence wanted me to——

ISABEL. And we all do what Florence wants; yes.





This is Mr. Ames, Mr. White. (*JOHNNIE goes to center behind first bench, tosses coat to FLORENCE, and shakes hands as she goes on.*) If you'll help us get our bags in the car——

JOHNNIE. Yes, indeed. (*He picks up the bags, getting both arms full.* FLORENCE, *with a sweet smile, gives the coat to AMES to hold for her.*)

ISABEL. (*Continuing smilingly*) We ought to be home by seven: and there'll be food, Mr. Ames! Won't that be—— (*She checks herself as she sees the care with which he is putting FLORENCE into her coat, and goes to JOHNNIE, left center. She hands him her own coat, still smiling.*) Johnnie, dear, if you'll—— (*JOHNNIE drops bags and holds coat for ISABEL.*)

JOHNNIE. (*Politely*) Yes, indeed, Miss Stuart.

FLORENCE. (*To AMES, right center*) I think you're a rogue!

AMES. (*Laughing consciously and rather uncomfortable*) What nonsense!

ISABEL. Now, if we can get the things into the car—— (*JOHNNIE and AMES pick up the bags and lunch basket; AMES gets into his overcoat. ISABEL goes on*) I think you'll have to let me sit by you, Johnnie, going home. I think you'll drive better.

JOHNNIE. (*A little blankly*) Yes'm. Glad to have you.

ISABEL. Are we all ready?

JOHNNIE. (*Going out up right with bags*) Yes'm.

FLORENCE. (*To AMES*) D'you think you can entertain me for forty miles? I do! (*She runs out.*)

AMES. (*Right center*) This is very kind of you to take me in, this way—I—ah—are you coming?

ISABEL. (*Left center, starts as if to go out, then stops and looks about her wistfully, yet smiling a little*) I just wanted to remember what this room looks like—by daylight. Things change so then. (*She takes his arm and starts up left.*) I'll take your

arm just till we get to the car ; then you'll have Florence. (*As they go slowly up she continues cheerfully*) Yes—I forgot to mention it last night ; yes, she's my *great-niece*. It wasn't her *father* who was my brother, you see——

AMES. (*Feebly*) It wasn't?

ISABEL. (*Cheerfully, as they reach a point near the door and pause*) No. It was her grandfather. (*ISABEL takes a last rather wistfully smiling look about the room as she speaks—a little absently.*)

AMES. (*Trying not to speak feebly*) Her grandfather was?

FLORENCE. (*Enters door. Takes AMES' arm with both of her hands*) Aren't you coming? You're going to sit with me, you know.

AMES. Well, I—— (*He is rather bewildered and FLORENCE pulls him out through door. JOHNNIE enters door and offers his arm to ISABEL.*)

ISABEL. Thank you, Johnnie. (*Both exit.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

An interior—a "living room" and "sun-room" combined—of the house at MISS STUART'S farm. It is a cheerful apartment in imaginative but quiet taste.

The sun-room does not so much open out of the living-room as form a part of it—the upper part—as an ample sort of alcove. Very simple pilasters against the living-room wall, up right and up left, mark the lower corners of the sun-room, giving the opening somewhat the effect of a very wide doorway or entrance. From each of these, the sun-room walls (which consist principally of French windows) extend a little distance up; and the living-room walls extend to right and to left, thence down to front. Two of the French windows of the sun-room are practicable doors, one up right and one up left. The back of the sun-room consists mainly of three French windows, through which there is a glimpse of trees just coming into young April leaf. This is only a glimpse, however, as the windows (which are all oblong, and without "half-moons" or arches at the top) are prettily curtained with figured or embroidered linen. The woodwork of the sun-room is apple green.

The living-room walls are done in a rather warm shade of tan; there is a fireplace with a Todhunter type of simple mantel, right center; and over it on the wall, a large old-fashioned mirror with gilt frame. Opposite the fireplace, left, are double doors. There is a phonograph in the

sun-room, up right, the view of which is scured by plants, and there is a "baby-gr piano in the corner of the living room up l closed cabinet stands against the up right of the living room, opposite the piano. The niture is all comfortable, pleasant to the ey, not new; blue-figured chintzes and easy holstery. There is a short blue velvet "di port" or sofa, right center, near the fire, and at its right elbow a very dark green co table.

There is a wire flower stand with potted flower center in the sun-room, two old-fashioned ci and a rag carpet medallion on the floor. There are side-lights, in both living room and sun- with shaded bulbs. There are some spr apple-blossoms in a jar on the piano.

The morning sunshine is bright outside the sun-windows, and the place is cheerful, but not murdering, with light. The fire is burning and facing it is an "old lady," for she is niably both; and with her cap, and old-fash gown, rather suggests Whistler's portrait of mother. She is dainty, but rather fretful youngish middle-aged man, on his knees, is bing the hearth and brass fender with a rag is a house-servant in working-clothes; we a great old blue apron, his dark trousers waistcoat; his shirt-sleeves are rolled up a has omitted a collar and tie. The old la FLORENCE'S aunt, ELLEN.

AUNT ELLEN. (In armchair by fireplace. I ing him to continue a narration) Well, and after they had their breakfast——

HENRY. Well, he went to sleep leanin' o mantelpiece, and then she had me take him up t in the big room.

AUNT ELLEN. Our having a gentleman visitor, it's quite exciting.

HENRY. Yes'm.

AUNT ELLEN. Is he going to stay over to-night with us?

HENRY. No'm. He said he had to get the noon train at Clinton on the main line. I got to drive him over, she says.

AUNT ELLEN. Would you consider him a very nice looking gentleman, Henry?

HENRY. (*Judicially*) Well, to *me* he looks more like a man that's kind o' got somep'in layin' heavy on his *mind*—like.

AUNT ELLEN. I should think *she'd* have been *dead*.

HENRY. No'm; she went over to the empty tenant's house in the buckboard.

AUNT ELLEN. She's a very remarkable woman, Henry. (*She says this slowly and with a kind of placid emphasis, as if she has said it, to the same listener, many times before.*)

HENRY. (*Placidly*) Yes, Miss Ellen. (*FLORENCE is heard outside, off up right.*)

FLORENCE. (*Off*) Henry! Hen-er-y! *Whoa*, there!

HENRY. (*Crosses to center*) It's Miss Florence; *she* went off horseback for her sleep. (*FLORENCE enters up right. She is dressed in riding-clothes: breeches, boots, waist, a short coat, and a dark straw hat; she has a riding crop in her hand. Yet there is a daintiness about her.*)

FLORENCE. (*As she enters*) Henry, don't you want to ride Tim down to the barn for me?

HENRY. (*Going up obediently*) Yes'm.

FLORENCE. (*Coming down*) H'lo, Aunt Ellen! (*HENRY exits up right.*) Had your breakfast? *Where's* Mr. Ames? (*She flings herself in a chair right of table left with one knee over its arm.*)

AUNT ELLEN. (*Frowning at the posture*) I haven't met him. Henry tells me he's resting.

FLORENCE. Poor thing! He's a right natty ole berry, though, Aunt Ellen.

AUNT ELLEN. (*Shuddering slightly*) Won't you some time speak English, Florence?

FLORENCE. (*Lightly*) None o' my friends'd understand me if I did. (*FLORENCE is always lighter than she is rough; and her tone of voice is prettier than the words she says. An electric bell rings faintly off left.*) That's Johnnie; I told him to clean up and come over and shoot some tennis.

AUNT ELLEN. (*Frowning*) When were you last in bed, Florence?

FLORENCE. When d'you think I was? Why, night before last. (*She giggles.*) Same as Aunt Isabel!

AUNT ELLEN. (*Coldly*) We won't discuss—

FLORENCE. (*With a suppressed chuckle*) No; I guess we better not!

AUNT ELLEN. But you, after being out in an automobile all night with this young Mr. White—

FLORENCE. (*Severely*) Hunting Aunt Isabel! (*She goes on at once with amused slyness.*) What do you think of Aunt Isabel's conduct, Aunt Ellen?

AUNT ELLEN. (*Primly*) I've told you I never discuss Aunt Isabel.

(*One of the double doors, left, opens and a middle-aged woman steps in. She is neat and responsible looking; but more of the housekeeper type than a "maid"; her name is MATTIE. She speaks immediately.*)

MATTIE. It's Mr. White.

FLORENCE. (*Not rising, turns her head and calls loudly toward the door*) Come on in, Johnnie!

AUNT ELLEN. (*Annoyed*) Florence, please!

FLORENCE. If Aunt Isabel can't reform me, you

can't, Aunt Ellen. (*Calling again.*) Johnnie! Come ahead in! (*JOHNNIE enters left, passing MAT-
TIE, who goes out left at once, closing the door.*
*JOHNNIE wears an old Norfolk jacket, a flannel
shirt, white flannel trousers, and tennis shoes. He
carries a racket in a shabby case under his arm and
has a cap in his hand. He speaks in a grieved tone
as he enters.*)

JOHNNIE. You said you'd be ready for—
Howdy do, Miss Ellen— (*This is a brief paren-
thesis to AUNT ELLEN, and he goes on immediately
to FLORENCE*) You expect to shoot tennis in boots?

FLORENCE. (*Rising*) Oh, I'll change. You pretty
near dead for sleep?

JOHNNIE. (*Incredulously*) Me? Bet you are!

FLORENCE. (*Carelessly*) I'll bet you ten dollars
I can go till day after to-morrow!

JOHNNIE. Never close your eyes?

FLORENCE. Yes, nor my mouth, either! (*Goes
up center.*)

JOHNNIE. (*Grimly*) I lose!

FLORENCE. I'll show you how sleepy I am! (*She
is at the victrola in the sun-room and as she speaks
she releases a lively dance record, and turns down,
extending her arms.*)

AUNT ELLEN. (*Crossly*) Florence! Do you
have to dance all the time?

FLORENCE. (*Seizing upon JOHNNIE*) Absolutely!
Come on! (*They begin to dance a very modern
dance.*)

AUNT ELLEN. And that poor gentleman trying
to get some rest upstairs!

FLORENCE. It's time for the ole kid to come down.
I want to talk some more to him!

JOHNNIE. (*As they go on dancing*) Done up,
was he? Well, take men that age, they can't do as
much as if—

FLORENCE. No; Think he's some three-year-old? That was a pretty rough trip we brought him.

JOHNNIE. Hark! I believe you'd flirt with George Washington if you got a chance!

FLORENCE. Hush up and get off my foot! (AUNT ELLEN *shudders*.)

JOHNNIE. (*Plaintive*) Your Aunt Isabel was listenin' to you the whole way, too! She didn't look to me as if she thought much of your style, either!

FLORENCE. Can't you dance without talkin'? What you think this is: a Chautauqua?

AUNT ELLEN. (*She has put on a pince-nez and looks at them sourly over her shoulder*) It certainly isn't dancing, is it? (*She is plaintively severe.*)

FLORENCE. I never *could* remember, Aunt Ellen: Was it you or grandma that walked a minuet with Alexander Hamilton?

AUNT ELLEN. (*Angrily*) It was my great-grand-mother!

FLORENCE. I guess *she'd* have been shocked enough if she'd ever seen *you* dancing when *you* were young?

AUNT ELLEN. (*Rising angrily*) Shocked at *my* dancing? At the *waltz*? The polka! The *schottische*?

FLORENCE. Oh, don't get so upset! (*She is a little irritated and speaks flippantly, but she keeps on dancing.*)

AUNT ELLEN. (*Sharply*) Shame on you!

FLORENCE. (*Hotly*) What for?

AUNT ELLEN. (*Rapidly*) To dance yourself, in *that* manner, and say anyone would be shocked at *my* dancing, and for saying I might have danced with Alexander Hamilton!

FLORENCE. (*Giggling*) Why? Wasn't he nice?

AUNT ELLEN. Shame!

FLORENCE. Oh, *do* sit down! (*It is a tiff, and they speak sharply and quickly.*)

AUNT ELLEN. (*Trembling*) Indeed, I shall not!

FLORENCE. Stand up, then! Gosh!

AUNT ELLEN. I will retire from the room! (*Going left.*)

FLORENCE. Oh, I apologize. Golly! (*HENRY enters up right, leaving the door open.*)

HENRY. (*As he enters*) She's back.

FLORENCE. (*With gloomy scorn, to AUNT ELLEN*) Now I s'pose you'll tell her all about it!

AUNT ELLEN. (*Quickly, but with over-dignity*) I shall not. Excuse me! (*Exits left.*)

FLORENCE. Oh, my! (*She flings herself in a chair right of table left.*) I wish—

JOHNNIE. (*Looking off up right and gloomily nodding in that direction to check FLORENCE, who is about to continue speaking*) Hark! You better hush up 'f you don't want her to— (*He means: if FLORENCE doesn't want ISABEL to perceive that there's been a row. FLORENCE checks herself. JOHNNIE goes to left of table.*)

ISABEL. (*Outside, up right*) Henry?

HENRY. (*Right center*) I'm waitin'.

(*ISABEL enters cheerfully up right in the sun-room. She wears a driving-coat over her dress, driving-gloves, and a "pretty little hat." As she comes in, her air is brisk, as of one fresh from driving on a cool morning, and she speaks as she comes down.*)

ISABEL. (*Center. Beginning to HENRY, interrupting herself to greet JOHNNIE, and then reverting to HENRY*) Henry—howdy do, Johnnie White—Henry, I want you to drive Mr. Ames to the train.

HENRY. Yes'm, you awready told me.

ISABEL. Let him know in plenty of time to start—but—well, not too much time. Not so that he'll have to wait a long while at the station. (*With a signifi-*

cance of her own thought that AMES has had a great deal of station-waiting lately.)

HENRY. No'm. (*Exit up left.*)

ISABEL. (*She turns to FLORENCE as HENRY goes out up right. FLORENCE's attitude and look are of a brooding sort. ISABEL's glance rests momentarily upon her, but she speaks to JOHNNIE*) Johnnie White, why is this lady so gloomy? (*JOHNNIE shakes his head briefly.*) What's the matter? (*To FLORENCE*) Where's your Aunt Ellen? Hasn't she come down yet?

FLORENCE. (*With rueful sulkiness*) Oh, yes; she was here!

ISABEL. (*Comprehending cheerfully*) Oh, I see. What was it about?

FLORENCE. She didn't like it because—— Why, I was only makin' fun of *old-fashioned* dancing. Everything old-fashioned is so funny.

ISABEL. (*Center*) Isn't it! I used to say that to my grandmother. Did you apologize?

FLORENCE. Yes. I did.

ISABEL. Did you say, "I apologize golly"?

JOHNNIE. (*Surprised*) Why, Miss Stuart! How'd you guess Florence said that?

ISABEL. (*Back of FLORENCE*) When you live with 'em, Johnnie, you get to know their habits. Do you know what she's thinking now? (*She puts her hand on FLORENCE's shoulder, FLORENCE still being seated.*)

JOHNNIE. (*Shaking his head*) No'm; I certainly don't.

ISABEL. She's wondering why people are always so *queer* when they get older.

JOHNNIE. (*With slightly sour significance*) Well, she might ask Mr. Ames about that. He must be anyway pretty near something way long over thirty or something, isn't he, Miss Stuart?

ISABEL. Yes, I'm afraid he must be almost that

near the end! But still I rather doubt if she *will* ask Mr. Ames about it, Johnnie. No; hardly. (*She crosses center. Smiling to him as he grins in rueful comprehension.*)

FLORENCE. Oh, I like old men. (*She comes out of her brooding fit as she rises.*) Don't you think Mr. Ames is terribly *intriguing*? (*Seriously and quickly.*)

ISABEL. "Intriguing?" No, I think he seems honest—well, *quite* honest, at least!

FLORENCE. But he has such a distinguished-looking face.

ISABEL. Well, he has an *uncle who's* distinguished; that is, he's always spoken of as *remarkable* because he plays polo at sixty-six. The uncle, I mean, Florence, of course.

FLORENCE. This man's a man that really interests me. I think from his looks he has the power to think. (*Severely*) Very few people have the power to think in this world, you know, Aunt Isabel.

ISABEL. (*Back of table*) Oh, yes; fewer and fewer every day! It's quite natural for— (*Turning unexpectedly to JOHNNIE.*) Have you the power to think, Johnnie White?

JOHNNIE. No'm. You know what she means, don't you?

FLORENCE. (*Coldly, absently*) Never mind.

ISABEL. (*In an impressed whisper, to JOHNNIE*) She's thinking. (*Crosses center.*)

FLORENCE. Aunt Isabel, I really *would* like him to stay over a day or so.

ISABEL. He said he had to go on to New York at noon. I'm afraid he made quite a point of it.

FLORENCE. (*Rises and crosses center*) Oh, well, you know men always *can* stay if they want to.

ISABEL. That's why it's better not to urge them; they may only make it clearer they don't want to.

FLORENCE. (*At the door*) Oh, Mr. Ames might change his mind—later. (*Crosses to door, left.*)

ISABEL. Before you begin with *that*, dear, could you please first go and apologize to your Aunt Ellen?

FLORENCE. Oh, all right. (*Moodily.*)

ISABEL. (*By the fireplace*) Try it without a golly!

FLORENCE. All right, I'll go and kid her to death. (*Exit left.*)

ISABEL. (*Turns to JOHNNIE, sitting on sofa, right*) Don't *you* seem to "intrigue" Florence at *all*, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE. No'm. She just takes a notion. (*He crosses to center.*)

ISABEL. You mean she just *gets* this way.

JOHNNIE. Yes'm; when there's somebody around she's fixin' to make 'em get mush over her. *You've* noticed that, haven't you, Miss Stuart?

ISABEL. I fancy I may have, just possibly!

JOHNNIE. *Then* she rubs that power-to-think business all over *me*, because the faculty found out I wasn't intellectual or something, so I had to abandon my college career. (*He is very serious.*)

ISABEL. (*Sitting on the sofa and concealing a tendency to laugh*) Come on. I see you want to say something more to me.

JOHNNIE. (*Swallowing. Sits on sofa left of Miss STUART*) Yes'm. Miss Stuart, you're a woman that's had a good many men go mush over you; so with your experience, why, the truth is, I may not have all the brains in the world, but she hasn't, either, but she gets these fits when she *thinks* she has; and what I want to say is simply: why, *you* know how it is, when there's some *new* man around, she treats me more like some door-mat than a person.

ISABEL. I understand you perfectly, Johnnie. Go ahead.

JOHNNIE. I just wanted to say so because you've

had prob'ly more experience of life than I've had, no doubt.

ISABEL. How long do you expect to feel this way about her, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE. (*Swallowing*) Well, if everything turns out all *right*—though it don't look so much like it right now, but if it does, and she finds out I'm her—her—well, her *real* mate, as it were, why, I expect to go on and on with her—and on and on—and on and—— (*He seems to be going on, though slowing down.*)

ISABEL. "On and on and on"—until you're just any age—oh, twenty-eight or even twenty-nine, maybe?

JOHNNIE. Yes'm. Indefinitely.

ISABEL. Suppose you were—past *thirty*, Johnnie. Suppose, like Mr. Ames, you were even—well, whatever age we'll say Mr. Ames is.

JOHNNIE. (*Slightly amused and incredulous*) What age—me? I guess prob'ly I'd be sittin' around somewhere, if I was alive.

ISABEL. But you'd still like Florence to be about nineteen, wouldn't you?

JOHNNIE. Well, about the way she looks now, yes'm. That's a good deal why I like her: the way she looks.

ISABEL. (*Smiling*) It isn't fair, is it?

JOHNNIE. Ma'am?

ISABEL. You see, when *you're* twenty you like us to be nineteen, and when you're fifty you're apt to like us to be nineteen! Well, we can't manage it, you see! We can't stay nineteen, much as we want to please you!

JOHNNIE. (*Smiles*) Oh, well, I guess I'd feel just the same about Florence if she was a thousand.

ISABEL. (*Looking at him quickly*) Would you? If she were a thousand?

JOHNNIE. (*Laughing a little ruefully*) I guess I would! (*As if he'd probably have to.*)

ISABEL. You *think* so?

JOHNNIE. (*Becoming serious*) Well, if I did, I guess *then* she'd know what sort of a man I *am*.

ISABEL. (*Thoughtfully and rather slowly*) Yes; she ought to!

JOHNNIE. (*Going on*) And she'd see how I really feel about her.

ISABEL. (*Smiling quickly*) Yes; so she would! It's quite an idea! (*Rises.*)

JOHNNIE. (*Rises*) 'Course I don't *think* anything'll come o' the way she acts over this Mr. Ames. For one thing, I b'lieve *he'd* have too much sense.

ISABEL. Do you? You can never be sure of *that*, Johnnie!

JOHNNIE. Well, she begged him a lot to stay over till to-morrow and he said he couldn't; just like he did when you asked him, Miss Stuart.

ISABEL. Yes, that looks intelligent of him, if he sticks to it and goes.

JOHNNIE. And, anyhow, he only said one *personal* thing to her all the time, and *it* was a kind of a joke.

ISABEL. (*Quickly*) He *did* say a personal thing to her?

JOHNNIE. It was when you went to hurry the cook with breakfast. Mr. Ames asked Florence—oh, well, it wasn't so *frightful* "personal."

ISABEL. What was it, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE. Well, she said she s'posed she'd be as old as her grandfather before she got any breakfast and he asked her if she knew how old her grandfather was.

ISABEL. He did? He asked her that? What did she tell him?

JOHNNIE. She didn't know. (*Anxiously*) Do you think that was pretty personal? I don't see—

ISABEL. (*Crosses center*) Why, yes; I believe I

do. I believe I think it was quite "personal" indeed—asking her how old her grandfather was!

(MATTIE enters, left.)

ISABEL. (*Quickly on her entrance*) What is it?

MATTIE. The gentleman. I heard him stirrin' round; you said to let you know.

ISABEL. (*Rather eagerly*) Yes?

MATTIE. I think he's comin' down.

ISABEL. (*Going toward her quickly*) Mattie, it seems to me you told me once you didn't think this was a becoming hat.

MATTIE. No'm. You ast me, and I says I never could like it on you, ma'am.

ISABEL. Good gracious! You might be right! (*She hurries away up through the sun-room and off up left.*)

JOHNNIE. Didn't hear Miss Florence stirrin' around or anything, did you?

MATTIE. (*With a glance toward where ISABEL departed*) Yes, sir. She's changin' her things—again—too! (*Going to exit left.*)

JOHNNIE. (*Rather sharply as she opens the door*) Will you ask her how long she thinks I—— (*He is checked by an approach seen through the open door; mutters, "Oh!" and turns right. AMES enters right, passing MATTIE, who waits for him to pass; then exit right. AMES has changed his clothes for tweeds; he looks freshened but preoccupied.*)

AMES. (*In greeting*) Ah—Mr. White? Haven't you been to bed at all?

JOHNNIE. (*Smiling*) No. J'you get rested up some? (*They shake hands.*)

AMES. (*Crossing to the fire, right*) Oh, yes; quite a little. I suppose our two—ah—comrades—aren't down yet. Miss Stuart must be pretty much exhausted, I'm afraid.

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JOHNNIE. She doesn't act like it. Right after you went up to bed she drove off to one of her farms on business. (*Sits right of table left.*)

AMES. She did?

JOHNNIE. (*Casually; not boasting for her*) Drivin' herself in a buckboard.

AMES. Why, I declare!

JOHNNIE. Oh, Miss Stuart's considered a pretty remarkable woman, you know.

AMES. (*Struck by this, frowns somewhat thoughtfully*) She is. She's considered—remarkable?

JOHNNIE. (*Shaking his head, seriously*) Yes, indeed! She's the most remarkable of her family.

AMES. (*Thoughtful*) I feel myself rather at a loss; I seem to be here so—so unexpectedly, as it were—and such a—a stranger. I'm rather—ah—confused about the family. Miss Stuart's father and mother, I take it, aren't living?

JOHNNIE. Golly, no! I dunno *when they died!*

AMES. (*Set back a little*) A considerable time ago, I suppose.

JOHNNIE. Well, *yes! Must 'a' been!*

AMES. (*Rather wistfully, yet trying to sound careless and casual*) You don't remember them, I take it?

JOHNNIE. (*Carelessly*) Me? Golly, no!

AMES. Ah—the present family, then——

JOHNNIE. It's just Miss Stuart and Miss *Ellen* Stuart and Florence.

AMES. Miss *Ellen* Stuart I haven't met. (*Sits on sofa.*)

JOHNNIE. She's Florence's aunt.

AMES. Her aunt?

JOHNNIE. Yes, I always get mixed up on relations, too. (*He sits on the small of his back, crossing his legs; and decides to try a wicked shot.*) I don't know how old *my* grandfather was when he died, any more'n Florence did hers!

AMES. (*Unconscious of the effort just made*) It seems to me that last night Miss Stuart spoke of *two* orphan nieces she was bringing up.

JOHNNIE. Bringin' up? Florence is one, but Miss Stuart couldn't 'a' meant she was bringin' Miss *Ellen* up. *She's* about a hundred—or a hundred and ten, maybe! Anyhow, she must be around sixty.

AMES. I must have been mistaken. Then there are just these three ladies in the family?

JOHNNIE. Three's all. They *do* need a man around.

AMES. Uh—yes. It would—ah—seem so. (*They look at each other with some coldness. FLORENCE is heard singing off left.*)

JOHNNIE. This un comin' needs more'n *one* the way she acts—lately!

(*FLORENCE enters, left, singing till she gets into the room, then she stops suddenly. She wears a most becoming tennis costume, but accompanies it with white high-heeled slippers. She has a pair of white tennis shoes in one hand, and a racquet and a net bag of tennis balls in the other. There are five or six balls, not all new. AMES rises and goes a little to right.*)

FLORENCE. (*Crosses to center, back of table. To AMES*) Oh! You're here, too!

JOHNNIE. (*Muttering ironically, not moving*) So'm I here, too!

AMES. (*Gallantly*) I'm glad you didn't know it, if that's why you kept on singing.

FLORENCE. (*Going over to him*) I told you in the car you were a quick worker! (*She doesn't smile.*) I've taken a frightful fancy to you!

JOHNNIE. (*Before AMES can speak*) One of the mail service aviators had to land in their back meadow

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here, last month. She pulled that on him before his wheels touched ground.

FLORENCE. I didn't!

JOHNNIE. (*Placidly stubborn*) You did. You had to holler to make him hear it!

FLORENCE. (*Turning seriously to AMES for sympathy*) These boys, nowadays, they think life's nothing but jazz. In this life people meet a girl, but so often they don't see she prob'ly has *thoughts* other people *couldn't think!* I have to lead two lives: one outdoors with mere adolescents, but the other—that's a life *apart*. You understand what I mean, don't you?

AMES. (*Smiling*) I think so.

FLORENCE. I thought you would. That's why you intrigue me so. (*Softly*) You're a great kid! (*She slaps him on arm.*)

JOHNNIE. Oh, listen! (*FLORENCE glances at him.*)

FLORENCE. Mr. Ames, don't you believe that very few people in this life have the power to really *think?*

JOHNNIE. (*Sliding to the floor from his chair*) Oo-ooh, Mike!

FLORENCE. (*Annoyed, turning*) Cut the rough stuff, you caterpillar. (*Her tone is severe but quiet.*)

JOHNNIE. (*Rising to his knees and seeming to paddle with his racquet at the tennis shoes in her hand*) You goin' to wear four shoes at the same time, *centipede?*

FLORENCE. (*Sitting*) I never can bear to put flat shoes on till the last minute. And then—— (*She removes one slipper.*) It's so troublesome gettin' 'em on——

AMES. May I help you?

FLORENCE. Oh, if you *would*——

JOHNNIE. (*Embittered, up center*) Oh! That's why you brought 'em! I *see!*

FLORENCE. (*Giving him a cold quick glance, but*

speaking to AMES. He kneels before her.) It's outrageous of me to let you take so much trouble! *(Then leaning toward him, she speaks softly.)*

JOHNNIE. Oh, my! *(He goes out of the picture, stepping out up right.)*

FLORENCE. *(Softly)* Mr. Ames, please stay over till to-morrow. I ask you to.

AMES. You're very kind. I couldn't let your aunt think I'm so vacillating. You see, I told her I had to be in New York this evening.

FLORENCE. But you just *said* you had to go, didn't you?—because you wanted to be polite about making an unexpected visit?

AMES. *(Laughing)* Yes; something like that. But after telling your aunt that I *couldn't* stay—

FLORENCE. But aren't there any reasons you'd *like* to stay?

AMES. *(Thoughtfully)* Yes, there are.

FLORENCE. Then I'll fix it for you. I'll say you sent a wire to New York letting 'em know you reached *here*, and I'll write a message on one of our telegraph blanks to you. It'll be the *answer* from New York telling you there isn't any reason for you to leave. *(She is pleased with her idea.)*

AMES. *(Laughing, but a little nervous over her idea)* Oh, no!

FLORENCE. I *will*! I'll have a man bring it in. Don't you spoil it.

AMES. I couldn't—

FLORENCE. Yes, you could! And when my telegram comes, if you give me *away*—*(She is interrupted by JOHNNIE'S return. JOHNNIE has been just beyond the threshold up right, looking off outdoors, and now comes in and down a few steps.)*

JOHNNIE. I got it!

FLORENCE. *(She checks AMES, who is about to expound his protest)* Hush! *(To JOHNNIE)* You got what?

JOHNNIE. Got a wish I just made. (*He points to door up left, then claps his hand over his mouth as if undesirous the lady entering should hear him; he is facing that way.* ISABEL enters up left in the sun-room. She has taken off her hat and coat; is in a very pretty morning dress, and carries some "work" in her hand; a "work bag." She comes in looking at JOHNNIE, who has his hand over his mouth.)

ISABEL. What's the matter, Johnnie White? (*He jerks his head toward AMES and FLORENCE, who are down right center. For an instant ISABEL lets it be seen that she is the least bit taken aback.*) Oh! (*She immediately smiles, as if pleased.*) Oh! (*She comes down as she speaks.*) Your shoes are too—large again, dear? (*The slightest check before "large."*)

AMES. (*Looking up at ISABEL with a little embarrassment*) Ah—she—I was helping her to—ah—change.

ISABEL. (*Smiling*) You were?

AMES. That is, I am. She mentioned some difficulty in—ah—doing it herself, and I—

ISABEL. (*Sunnily*) I should think you would! Who wouldn't? And who wouldn't make it as long as possible, too! (*She turns to a chair, left center.*)

AMES. (*Rising*) It's—ah—done. (*As he has taken off FLORENCE's second slipper he has unconsciously put it under his arm, where it still is.*)

ISABEL. Is it? Already?

JOHNNIE. (*Sharply, to FLORENCE*) C'm' on, here!

FLORENCE. All right, I'm coming. What's the hurry?

JOHNNIE. (*FLORENCE goes up as he speaks. JOHNNIE has gone down to the sofa she has occupied, and has picked up the bag of tennis balls. He immediately goes up, after FLORENCE. He calls out.*) Go ahead! (*All in a breath.*) Betcha dollar I beat

you t' the tennis court! *(Both rush for the door up right. He swings her back up right. FLORENCE strikes at him with her racket.)*

FLORENCE. *(Giggling as she runs after him)* No fair, you got a start!

(ISABEL is looking at AMES, who is standing, still in some embarrassment, near the fireplace, unconscious of the slipper under his arm; he is looking up at the departing couple. The other slipper is on the seat of FLORENCE'S chair.)

ISABEL. Aren't they extraordinary, Mr. Ames? *(AMES turns.)* Aren't they extraordinary, these young things! Not tidy, though. She's left her slippers on the sofa. *(Glancing at the slipper, then again at him; she begins to sew some lace into cambric.)*

AMES. *(Still embarrassed and not catching this)* It seems to me you're rather extraordinary yourself, my dear—*(He pauses an instant, then hastily adds)*—lady. *(So that his phrase is "my dear lady.")*

ISABEL. *(As if a little suspiciously)* I? Do you think so? In what way?

AMES. Sleeping a few hours on a wooden bench, motoring forty miles of mud hills, then driving off in a buckboard instead of collapsing!

ISABEL. *(Looking at him)* Oh, a country life keeps people quite robust. It's "remarkable"! *(Then looking at her work.)* As I said, though, I'm afraid Florence is untidy, sometimes. *(With a little gesture toward the slipper.)* You see where she's left that pair of slippers.

AMES. *(Glancing at it absently)* Pair? Ah—there's only one.

ISABEL. *(Bending her head over her work)* So? Could you find the other? *(Sits right of table left.)*

AMES. Oh, certainly. *(He glances absently about,*

then realizes, with a start, that the slipper is under his arm; she seems oblivious of everything except her lace-making. He hastily puts the slipper under the chair; straightens up and looks at her again. She seems as before. He stoops, looking about.) Ah—I think it's under the—— Oh, yes. Here it is. *(He puts it with the other one and comes to center.)*

ISABEL. Will you set them on the hearth, please?

AMES. Certainly.

ISABEL. *(With a matter-of-fact amiability)* Then it'll be easy to find them if she comes back soon to have them put on again.

AMES. Oh, ye—— *(He begins to say, "Oh, yes," but checks himself uncomfortably. He places shoes at fireplace, then goes to right center—and is conscious of them as rather damnatory; and a pause follows in which he glances back and down at them twice.)*

ISABEL. I'm sorry you felt you couldn't stay over till to-morrow, but since you insisted you *couldn't*—*(Inquiringly, as if giving him a chance to alter his mind.)*

AMES. I—I'm afraid I ought to get back.

ISABEL. *(With a submissive nod, regretting)* Very well. I've arranged for you to go.

AMES. Ah—thank you. *(Moving toward her.)* Ah—— Is that lace you are making?

ISABEL. Do you like it?

AMES. *(Putting on a pair of glasses, rather hastily looking at the lace and, as hastily, slipping the glasses back into his waistcoat pocket again as he speaks)* It's very lovely—yes. You must have remarkable eyes to do that.

ISABEL. *(After a look at him)* Yes, my eyes are quite good. *(Using "quite" to mean "rather" as elderly people speak of pleasant faculties still remaining.)*

AMES. Is it a—what they call a doyley?

ISABEL. (*Glancing at him thoughtfully*) I wonder if I oughtn't to make a little—cap—of it.

AMES. (*Perplexed*) A cap?

ISABEL. Don't you think it's a pretty fashion—a lace cap on the head?

AMES. You mean like the Breton peasant women?

ISABEL. No; I was thinking of our grandmothers.

AMES. But—ah——

ISABEL. (*Letting it touch her hair a moment*) Would you—like me in it? (*Her tone is entirely "natural," as if she considered the possibility seriously.*)

AMES. (*Trying not to be at all flustered*) Of course I should—like you—in anything.

ISABEL. Are you sure you would?

AMES. Why, how can you ask me?

ISABEL. (*Working*) As sure as you were last night?

AMES. Yes, indeed.

ISABEL. And you *would* like me in a cap?

AMES. Well, wouldn't it seem a little——

ISABEL. Do you mean you think it would seem a little—premature?

AMES. Decidedly, I—— (*Breathlessly correcting himself.*) Of course it would. I meant—— (*Goes back of table to left.*)

ISABEL. You mustn't flatter me too much.

AMES. (*With almost plaintive inquiry*) "Flatter" you?

ISABEL. (*Smiling*) I'll keep off the cap as long as I *can*. Really, there's no excuse for caps now. I suppose women used to wear 'em because in those days there were so few supplies.

AMES. (*Blankly*) Supplies?

ISABEL. Yes—like imports from Paris. And, besides, they didn't approve of 'em, poor things!

AMES. Pardon me. Who didn't approve of what?

ISABEL. Our grandmothers didn't approve of ac-

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complishing marvels with cosmetics. You know the miracles they do to faces nowadays.

AMES. Miracles? (*Sits left of table.*)

ISABEL. It's—remarkable! No; there's no excuse for a woman to wear a cap these days—not till she has to just *absolutely* give up! (*Then at her work.*) Don't you think so?

AMES. Oh—oh, yes!

ISABEL. Oh, it's just struck me—— (*Rises.*) I ought to be entertaining you, oughtn't I? But we haven't any family photograph album.

AMES. What a lucky family!

ISABEL. I could show you some daguerreotypes, though. Yes—(*Rising suddenly upon a thought*)—you ought to see some of our heirlooms. (*She gives him a fleeting faint smile, and leaving her work on the table, left center, goes to the closed cabinet against the wall up right; opens the doors, and brings forth an old mahogany case. She brings this down to the table, left center, opens it, takes out a folding daguerreotype.*)

AMES. (*Rather surprised*) Daguerreotypes?

ISABEL. (*Stands back of table*) Yes. We don't show them to *every* visitor, of course. Sit down. (*She hands him the daguerreotype.*) There. You like my father?

AMES. (*Rather touched, yet rather apprehensive*) Is that your father? He must have been a very fine-looking man. Is that a—a stock he's wearing?

ISABEL. Yes. I did think stocks were so becoming, didn't you? (*Handing him another daguerreotype.*) That's my Aunt Margaret, father's sister, at ninety-one. We all live very long on my father's side.

AMES. Ah—very intelligent face.

ISABEL. Daguerreotypes *have* a charm, haven't they? I wonder people stopped taking them.

AMES. (*Becoming more preoccupied*) I don't

think I ever saw any daguerreotypes taken much after the Civil War.

ISABEL. No; I don't think I have, either. (*Handing him another.*) That's my Uncle Charles, in his uniform. He was a colonel.

AMES. In the—Civil War?

ISABEL. Oh, no, in the Mexican War.

AMES. (*More disturbed, but concealing it fairly well*) Ah—he must have been a very fine-looking man.

ISABEL. Yes, indeed! (*She smiles as she hands him another.*) Here's one of a little girl—that is, a young girl. Does anything about her strike you as—familiar?

AMES. (*Looking at her, not at the daguerreotype, and trying to conceal a foreboding*) Familiar?

ISABEL. Yes. See if you don't guess who it is.

AMES. (*Vaguely*) "Who is it?" (*He looks at it; then suddenly looks closer; starts slightly, draws his head back from it, staring incredulously.*)

ISABEL. Can't you guess who it is?

AMES. (*Husily*) Why it can't— (*He looks apprehensively to her and back again with painfully growing conviction.*)

ISABEL. Why can't it?

AMES. Isn't it your—mother?

ISABEL. (*In a tone that smilingly chides him for being so slow*) No-o—

AMES. (*With some plaintiveness*) Why, there weren't any taken after—why, it couldn't be—

ISABEL. (*With a little archness*) Oh, but this girl—you see, she was only a child, really.

AMES. (*Feebly trying to be hearty*) Oh, yes; that's all she was. I see. She wasn't—

ISABEL. (*Sunnily*) No. Not over sixteen or seventeen, no. Don't you see any resemblance?

AMES. (*With a slight struggle*) Well, it's charming enough to—

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ISABEL. It's a sister of mine.

AMES. It is? Your sister?

ISABEL. (*Musingly*) Yes, she was quite a lot older than I am and married a missionary and they were lost in a typhoon.

AMES. Oh—I'm sorry.

ISABEL. (*Reassuringly*) Oh, it was quite a time ago. (*She smiles and puts the pictures back in the box.*) There! I just wanted to see if you'd see the resemblance: I won't put you through all the others. (*She takes up her work and sits again as she speaks.*)

AMES. (*Huskily*) Thank you! (*Then hurriedly*) Thank you for showing 'em to me! (*He rises, wipes his forehead hastily, and moves toward the fireplace, taking out his cigarette case.*) Thank you. May I smoke here? (*She nods.*) I—ah—I—ah— (*Crosses to console table, right center. Lights cigarette.*)

ISABEL. (*Cheerfully and working*) Daguerreotypes and things like that bring back such dear old times to us, don't they?

AMES. (*Unguardedly*) I suppose they— (*Hastily*) They do, of course! (*He takes out two cigarettes.*) Yes, they do bring them back. (*She gives him a glance, and bends over her work. Seated right of table left.*)

ISABEL. "Where are the snows of yesteryear?" Yes, but where are the yesteryears themselves? "The wind has blown them all away!" Do you remember when all the young men made "New Year's Calls" and all the girls and their mothers kept "Open House"—those dear jolly old times?

AMES. Oh, yes, indeed. I've heard they—

ISABEL. Even politics seemed simpler then. It was easier when we let men do all that for us, though they *did* get so many things wrong, poor things!

AMES. Oh, I don't know; we elected Roosevelt, and—

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ISABEL. (*With a spiritedness, as of patriotic indignation*) Yes, but if women had voted when Mr. Tilden ran against Hayes—and—Wheeler, you surely don't believe there'd have been all that excitement over the election, do you?

AMES. I—I—don't—

ISABEL. (*Earnestly*) You *know* that was a terrible thing.

AMES. About Tilden and Hayes—and—Wheeler?

ISABEL. *Don't* you think it was?

AMES. Yes, I suppose it— (*He does not finish, but hastily substitutes:*) Oh, yes; it *was*, of course.

ISABEL. My poor father used to get excited over that to the day of his death!

AMES. (*Relieved*) Oh, your father did! (*Crosses right.*)

ISABEL. Well, I thought it was wrong, too. (*He stares at her, again perplexed; she sews.*)

AMES. You ah—

ISABEL. (*Casually*) What?

AMES. (*Apologetically*) Nothing. That is, I had nothing in mind to say. (*Goes up right.*)

ISABEL. (*Musing, smiling*) I suppose my father felt it so much because he *knew* Mr. Tilden. I never *met* him. (*As if she had met others like him.*) But I *should* like to see Mr. Cleveland's expression if he could see women voting! Or General Harrison's!

AMES. General Harrison's expression? Do you mean Harrison who was *President*—in, ah—eighteen—ah— (*Goes to right center, back of sofa.*)

ISABEL. Yes; President Benjamin Harrison. Good gracious! I didn't mean his *grandfather*, President William Henry Harrison, who was President in eighteen-forty or something!

AMES. (*Hastily, laughing feebly*) No, no. I knew you didn't mean *him*!

ISABEL. Well, no! (*She sews, and takes up the*

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theme as if musing absently.) Most of them used to be Generals before they ran for President, didn't they?

AMES. You mean like General Harrison?

ISABEL. Yes. General Harrison, General Garfield—

AMES. Oh—yes.

ISABEL. And most of *all*, General Grant.

AMES. (*Feebly*) Yes, General Grant.

ISABEL. (*Laughing absently as she sews*) We'd hardly remember *him*—of course. (*She looks up at him as if disquieted by a thought, though she smiles nervously.*) You—you never did see him, did you? (*As if diplomatically getting at his age.*)

AMES. General Grant? No.

ISABEL. (*As if relieved, smiling a little, as if at an absurdity as she looks back at her work*) Of course I supposed not.

AMES. No. I never did. (*She looks up at him innocently, carelessly, then seems to become aware of something unusual in his look at her.*)

ISABEL. What is it?

AMES. I—ah—nothing!

ISABEL. Oh, yes; I can tell: You're thinking about something that bothers you. At least you looked as if you were puzzling about something. Weren't you?

AMES. (*Hurriedly*) Indeed, I wasn't; not at all!

ISABEL. I'm sure you *are* wondering about something.

AMES. No. I'm not. Not about anything at all. (*Crosses right to front of sofa.*)

ISABEL. Yes, but you are. I wonder if I know what you're wondering about.

AMES. (*Too quickly—sits on sofa*) No, you don't. That is, I meant to say you don't, because I'm *not*, so you couldn't.

ISABEL. But I think I do.

AMES. Indeed, you're mistaken. I'm not wondering about anything. Not about *anything*!

ISABEL. Aren't you even wondering anything—about *me*?

AMES. No, no; certainly not. (*Rises.*) Nothing at all. That is, I'm not wondering. Of course I'm *thinking* about you——

ISABEL. (*Quickly*) What are you thinking about me?

AMES. Nothing. Nothing at all.

ISABEL. (*Nodding*) I see. You're thinking about me, but you aren't thinking anything in *particular* about me.

AMES. Yes. No!

ISABEL. I understand perfectly.

AMES. No, but you don't.

ISABEL. Yes. You meant yes *and* no. Didn't you?

AMES. Well, I—— (*Crosses back of table to left.*)

ISABEL. Of course you did. That clears it all up, you see; "yes *and* no." (*Smiling.*) I'm glad you made it so plain.

AMES. (*Thoroughly confused and rather dismayed*) But what? What was it I made plain?

ISABEL. What you were thinking about *me*. It's perfectly natural you *would* wonder a little about that, too.

AMES. But I didn't. I *assure* you I didn't wonder——

ISABEL. (*Interrupting*) How could you *help* wondering about what you're wondering about?

AMES. But I'm *not*! Indeed I'm *not*!

ISABEL. (*Laughing*) Why, of course you are! You're wondering *just how* romantic I am. That's what you're wondering!

AMES. (*Much relieved—sits*) Oh! Oh, well, per-

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haps I was wondering a little about *that*! Yes, I—I admit it. You *are* romantic, you say?

ISABEL. I was when I was a child.

AMES. (*With some eagerness*) What were you romantic about then?

ISABEL. When I was a child?

AMES. Yes. What did you find to be romantic about? What—uh—in a *general* way, I mean.

ISABEL. (*Lightly thoughtful*) Oh—well, I suppose the same things *you* were being romantic about at the same time—that is, *about* the same time—I suppose. (*She does not smile and speaks without stress.*)

AMES. (*Smiling nervously, trying to be easy*) Oh, yes.

ISABEL. I think there was a great romantic influence upon the whole country about that time, don't you?

AMES. Just about—then? (*Slight stress on "then."*)

ISABEL. Yes. I think what did it was the World's Fair.

AMES. You do? Well, there was the San Francisco Fair and the St. Louis one and the—the one at Buffalo and—and, yes, wasn't there one once in Chicago in—ah, in—

ISABEL. Yes, and one in Philadelphia in 1876.

AMES. But I meant: which one was the one you meant made everybody so romantic?

ISABEL. (*Easily as she sews again*) I was speaking of the one when I was a child.

AMES. Oh, yes, *that* one. (*He is uncomfortably going on, if he can think what to say.*)

ISABEL. (*Looking up innocently*) I know what you're trying to do.

AMES. Why, we were just talking along. I wasn't trying to—to—to—

ISABEL. Why, yes, you were.

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AMES. No, no, I——

ISABEL. Yes. You keep on trying to find out how romantic I still *am*!

AMES. Oh! Oh, well——

ISABEL. Oh, I don't mean that I'm as romantic as *you* are, Mr. Ames! The *most* romantic woman isn't so romantic as the *least* romantic man.

AMES. What?

ISABEL. It's very simple. You see, men don't get older.

AMES. Men don't?

ISABEL. No, they don't. They don't get older and they stay young and romantic.

FLORENCE. (*Outside*) Mr. Ames! Mr. Ames!

ISABEL. Don't they? Stay romantic?

AMES. Well, I—I——

ISABEL. For instance, when you're interested in anyone, don't you prefer to be alone with them?

AMES. Yes, I do—I am—we are——

FLORENCE. (*Outside*) Mr. Ames! Mr. Ames!

ISABEL. Doesn't she mean you?

AMES. Oh, yes, your charming little niece.

ISABEL. Charming! Yes!

AMES. Oh, that doesn't mean that I like all of them. I believe I mentioned that last night.

ISABEL. Yes, I believe you did.

AMES. But there is something about this one that——

ISABEL. Yes!

AMES. Yes, indeed! She's your——

FLORENCE. (*Outside*) Mr. Ames! Mr. Ames!

ISABEL. She's calling you, isn't she?

AMES. So it seems.

ISABEL. Hadn't you better——

AMES. Yes. I'll just tell her—perhaps I'd better.

ISABEL. Yes, do.

AMES. Yes, yes, I—— (*Goes up center, looking off right.*)

FLORENCE. (*Outside*) Mr. Ames! (*ISABEL rises and goes to left center, listens for a second, and then crosses to door, left.*)

AMES. Just a moment! Your aunt and I—oh, have you finished your game? (*ISABEL exits door, left.*)

FLORENCE. (*Outside*) I'm coming.

AMES. She's coming. (*Turns and stares at ISABEL's vacant chair. Goes up center, looks off left. Goes to door down left and looks off.*) Well, I—

(*FLORENCE enters up right.*)

FLORENCE. (*Has her racquet but not the net of balls*) I knocked all the balls as far as I could in the shrubbery. He has to hunt till he finds 'em. (*Comes down left center.*) Then I ran and fixed about that telegram.

AMES. (*Apprehensively*) Oh, no. I really can't—

FLORENCE. (*Lightly*) Don't worry! If you don't like it when it comes, you can just say it isn't important and tear it up, can't you?

AMES. I suppose so. (*Disturbed.*)

FLORENCE. Attaboy! (*Crosses right.*)

AMES. (*Nervously, pacing up and down left*) But I—

FLORENCE. (*Seriously*) Is anything bothering you? (*She sits on sofa, right.*)

AMES. (*With a rather hurried laugh*) Why, of course not!

FLORENCE. Did Aunt Isabel say—

AMES. She said—she said—I understood her to say that she wasn't your aunt exactly—

FLORENCE. (*Carelessly*) No, she's my great-aunt.

AMES. Yes; so she said.

FLORENCE. Why?



AMES. Of course there are a great many young great-aunts.

FLORENCE. (*Carelessly*) Young great-aunts? I don't see how they *could* be.

AMES. (*Looking at her plaintively*) Oh, I meant comparatively, like your Aunt Isabel.

FLORENCE. Oh, I s'pose Aunt Ellen knows how old Aunt Isabel is, but you know how some women are.

AMES. (*Hurriedly*) You mean these miracles?

FLORENCE. No; I mean they don't usually *tell*. I don't see why people get so sensitive about things like that; I'll tell anybody that wants to know, what I am; I'm nineteen; I don't care! Golly!

AMES. (*Right*) Well, it's a subject I'm interested in; always been interested in, I mean. I mean in a *general* way, of course.

FLORENCE. What you gettin' at? Do you always do this when you're alone with people; talk about other women and their ages?

AMES. (*Hastily*) No! No, indeed, I don't!

FLORENCE. (*Coldly*) If you're so anxious about it, why, I'm on right confidential terms with Aunt Isabel and I *could* ask her right out how——

AMES. (*Vehemently*) No! You mustn't think of such a thing. You really mustn't!

FLORENCE. I won't. That is, I won't if you're nice to me. Don't I intrigue you *any*?

AMES. You do! Don't you see how much you do?

FLORENCE. I never have had a chance at a man of experience. You wouldn't ever think that I *suffer* terribly, would you?

AMES. You do? (*Sits on sofa, left of FLORENCE.*)

FLORENCE. I suffer *fearfully*!

AMES. What from?

FLORENCE. Well, from thoughts. I suffer because

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nobody understands 'em and so I can't tell 'em. I don't know what makes me tell *you* all these things, like this—(*Smiles at him trustingly*)—but it's nice, our getting intimate this way, isn't it? (*Going almost straight on.*) Do you remember where you left my slippers?

AMES. (*With secret alarm*) Your slippers?

FLORENCE. Will you see, please? I thought maybe you'd be so awfully kind as to—— (*She sweetly lets the inference be made as she projects a foot.*)

AMES. (*Uneasily*) I rather think your aunt said she was coming back.

FLORENCE. Don't you remember what you did with 'em? (*A sweet, slight reproach.*)

AMES. I think I put them——

FLORENCE. (*Looking about*) They haven't been taken out, have they?

AMES. (*Right center*) I don't think so. I didn't see anyone——

FLORENCE. Why, there they are on the hearth!

AMES. Oh, yes, so they are!

FLORENCE. Would it be too outrageous of me to——

AMES. Oh, no, indeed! (*Rises and starts left.*)

FLORENCE. No, over there. (*AMES crosses to fireplace. Gets slippers.*)

AMES. (*Glancing apprehensively left*) I'll be only too delighted! (*He kneels.*)

FLORENCE. (*As he helps her to exchange the tennis shoes for the slippers*) My, it's a relief to be with a man that understands the deeper side of life a few minutes now and then! (*None of FLORENCE'S speeches should be exaggerated in manner or "pointed."*)

AMES. (*Nervously*) I'm glad you like it.

FLORENCE. Is that all? Couldn't you make it any stronger? Don't you think I'm a grand little thing? (*She bends toward him, apparently earnest.*)

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AMES. (*Smiling wanly but speaking with warmth*)
I do.

FLORENCE. You do—what?

AMES. I do—indeed!

(JOHNNIE enters up right with the net of tennis balls.)

FLORENCE. (*Earnestly*) Attaboy! You're sure you "do indeed"?

JOHNNIE. (*Up right center, speaking all in a breath*) Why don't you try the lady with a pair o' nines, Mr. Ames. We got a good stock o' nine-B's on the top shelf in the store-room!

(AUNT ELLEN enters left. She comes in rather quickly; her expression is gracious; but she is astonished to find AMES on his knees before FLORENCE. She halts sharply, speaks quickly; and at once turns to go out indignantly by the way she has come.)

AUNT ELLEN. Excuse me! (*Turns back left.*)

AMES. Oh—— (*He would rise, but FLORENCE checks him.*)

FLORENCE. My other slipper!

AMES. (*Hastily*) But I—— (*He sees ISABEL through open door left.*) Oh, gracious! (*Rising. ISABEL enters, left.*)

ISABEL. (*Smilingly and smoothly—as she enters*) Ellen, dear, I've been looking for you; to meet Mr. Ames. (*Laughing commiseratingly, she comes to them.*) Poor Florence, is she having trouble with her new slippers again? (*ISABEL points to tennis shoe AMES has under his arm; he immediately throws it on sofa.*) I'm afraid you'll think we're terrible people to make use of our visitors, Mr. Ames.

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AMES. (*Who has risen*) Oh, no, not at all, not at all, indeed!

ISABEL. (*Has crossed to right of him, ELLEN is left center*) I'm afraid we do, though. You'll make up your mind never to come here again! (*With a gesture indicating ELLEN.*) I think I told you I wanted you to meet my other—ah—— (*She is speaking with inconsequent cheerfulness—and tapers the sound off as he turns toward ELLEN.* ISABEL, *smilingly nodding toward ELLEN*) Ellen, dear, this is Mr. Ames.

AMES. Ah, ah—— (*He bows.*)

AUNT ELLEN. (*Non-committal*) How do you do?

ISABEL. Mr. Ames, Ellen is my other niece.

AMES. Your other—— How do you do? (*With a blank expression. He makes an inarticulate sound and stands in an instantaneously arrested attitude.*)

ISABEL. (*Easily*) Now you know my whole family; my niece and my great-niece. They're both the greatest comfort to me.

AMES. (*Hastily*) Oh, yes. Thank you!

ISABEL. (*Lightly turning from him*) And, Florence, if you've finished with the—the footwear——

(*ELLEN sits by the table, left center.*)

AMES. Oh, yes, we've finished.

ISABEL. (*Sunnily including JOHNNIE and speaking as if she were trying to think of something entertaining for them*) Then wouldn't—wouldn't you three like to—wouldn't you three like to dance or something?

AMES. What?

ISABEL. (*Crossing to ELLEN near the table, left center*) You must all go right on entertaining yourselves just as if we weren't here. We love to look on, don't we, Ellen?

AUNT ELLEN. (*With a glance toward FLORENCE'S*

feet) Yes, when they behave. (*Sits left of table—*
ISABEL *sits right of table.*)

ISABEL. (*Laughing to ELLEN on this, then at once speaking to the other group*) Can't you think of anything to amuse yourselves? (*Then as with a quick afterthought, not seriously said, yet perhaps meant*) You don't mind our being here, do you?

FLORENCE. (*Jumping up*) Of course not! Turn on that record!

ISABEL. Yes. Music, Johnnie! (*JOHNNIE goes up.*)

AUNT ELLEN. (*Grimly, to ISABEL, who is taking her seat by the table*) But they don't dance; they only waggle. It's fearful! (*JOHNNIE pauses.*)

ISABEL. Oh, but they love it so; they mustn't be disappointed. (*To the others*) She doesn't really mind; you can dance. (*She sits, taking up her "work."*)

FLORENCE. Attaboy! (*She seizes AMES' hand.*)

AMES. (*Nervously*) I don't know these new dances!

ISABEL. She'll teach you. Music, Johnnie!

(*JOHNNIE turns on the records.*)

FLORENCE. (*Forcing AMES to dance*) C'm' on! I never heard of a man that couldn't dance with me! Ouch! (*She hops, her foot slightly injured, but keeps on dancing.*)

AMES. (*As she cries out*) Murder!

ISABEL. (*Under cover to him; he is close to her*) Walk. Just walk. That's all you need to do. (*He does better upon this.*) That's it; just walk.

FLORENCE. (*To AMES*) Isn't it divine?

(*HENRY enters up right.*)

ISABEL. (*Indulgently, to AUNT ELLEN*) Isn't it

delightful to see them so happy? (HENRY comes down to ISABEL. He has a folded telegraph blank in his hand. She observes him.) It isn't time for Mr. Ames' train, Henry?

HENRY. No'm. (He shows the blank.)

ISABEL. Oh! Something for me? (She rises and extends her hand for the blank.)

FLORENCE. (Seeing this) Oh, murder! (Under her breath. They stop dancing, left center.)

ISABEL. (As HENRY hands her the blank) What is it?

HENRY. (As ISABEL examines the blank) I don't rightly know, ma'am. I was told about it in such a hurry. (He glances nervously at FLORENCE.) I may not 'a' got my instructions just exactly.

ISABEL. (Puzzled) Your "instructions"? Oh, this isn't really a telegram. No; there's no envelope, and date, and it's written in such a bad backhand I can hardly—— Oh! (She speaks as though with a sudden revelation, comprehending, and glances quickly at FLORENCE.) Oh, I see. (Rises.) I don't think it's for me, Henry. (Hands telegram to HENRY.)

FLORENCE. Here, let me! (She comes to the rescue, seizes the blank, hands it swiftly to AMES, who stands dismayed.) You see, Mr. Ames wired his partners from here and so this must be from them. Of—course it's a telegram; isn't it, Mr. Ames?

ISABEL. (Gently insistent) Is it, Mr. Ames?

AMES. (Desperately) I can't read it!

ISABEL. It is a difficult handwriting. (She knows it is FLORENCE's hand, though somewhat disguised.)

FLORENCE. (Taking the blank hastily) I can read most any hand. Why, yes, it's perfectly plain. It says: "No business in the office to-day. If you wish to remain where you are no reason whatever for returning to New York. Signed Witherspoon and Ames." He told me himself he had a partner named

Witherspoon. (*Goes back of table. JOHNNIE stops phonograph.*)

ISABEL. (*To AMES*) Oh, then it is a real telegram? (*She knows, of course, it isn't.*)

AMES. (*As FLORENCE turns quickly toward him*) Why, it—ah—seems to be.

ISABEL. Oh, then you'll—you'll stay? (*If he stays it appears that he stays upon FLORENCE'S urgency.*)

AMES. Why—I—I—

ISABEL. (*Covering her real feeling*) Mr. Ames won't be going to the station, Henry.

(*HENRY exits up left. FLORENCE has carelessly set the blank upon the table, after reading it, her fingers resting upon it, but AUNT ELLEN draws it away to look at it, FLORENCE turning as if to reclaim it.*)

AUNT ELLEN. (*Rather excitedly*) But there isn't even an envelope; it isn't a real telegram; the writing's queer, but it looks exactly like Flor—— (*She finishes the word, but ISABEL cuts her off loudly on "Flor."*)

ISABEL. (*Pushing the bell-button, on left wall*) Music, Johnnie! Isn't it lovely? Now you can dance all day! (*She turns to center as she speaks, and limps suddenly. And says "Oh, oh!" as if in pain. JOHNNIE has started the vocalion at her first word. It plays softly. FLORENCE has seized AMES' hand with a jubilant "Hooray!" as the music starts. But they pause as AUNT ELLEN speaks.*)

AUNT ELLEN. What's the matter with you?

ISABEL. Nothing—oh! (*She limps again.*)

JOHNNIE. (*Coming down anxiously*) What is the matter, Miss Stuart?

ISABEL. Nothing. I'm afraid I sat a little too long on a baggage truck in a cold wind last night, that's all. It's nothing.

FLORENCE. Oh, rheumatism; that's nothing! (*She retains AMES' hand; moves as if to begin dancing.*)

(MATTIE enters, left, her right hand behind her.)

AMES. (*Plaintively, to FLORENCE*) Just a—— (*He means "Just a moment," but breaks away from FLORENCE and crosses to center to speak to ISABEL.*) I hope it's nothing very——

ISABEL. No—no—it isn't—it's just a—just a touch. You mustn't stop dancing. (*FLORENCE crosses to center, takes AMES up center to dance.*)

JOHNNIE. (*Taking ISABEL'S arm decisively*) Here! I'll look after you, Miss Stuart; I'd prefer to. (*He gives FLORENCE a bitter look.*)

ISABEL. Thank you, Johnnie. (*To MATTIE*) Did you find them, Mattie?

MATTIE. (*Hurriedly*) Ya don't want to put 'em on here, do you?

ISABEL. (*Quiet pathos*) No, I'll—— (*As if to go out left.*)

JOHNNIE. Put what on?

ISABEL. Nothing.

MATTIE. (*Bringing her hand from behind her, showing an old pair of rather large, flat black slippers. Not displaying them pointedly to audience*) Them. I don't mind lendin' 'em to you, but——

ISABEL. (*Quickly, checking her*) I thought perhaps they might help me, but not—not—— (*"Not now and here," she means; the scene is hurried.*)

JOHNNIE. (*Taking the slippers, speaks quickly and emphatically*) Why not? Why, certainly! You let me put—'em on for you, Miss Stuart. I'd prefer to! I'd very much prefer to! Here! You better lie down. (*He is conducting her to the sofa, her limp increasing a little.*)

ISABEL. (*Trustfully*) Do you think I'd better lie down, Johnnie?



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JOHNNIE. (*Severely, to MATTIE*) Whyn't you fix those pillows for her? (*ISABEL lies down. MATTIE hastily obeys the suggestion.*) She's all tired out. And I guess she's had enough to make *anybody* tired! (*He takes off her slippers.*)

AMES. What is the matter, Miss Stuart?

JOHNNIE. (*Quickly, sharply*) Why, she's been made awful tired and she's got rheumatism and *everything*!

ISABEL. Oh, no; not quite!

JOHNNIE. (*To MATTIE*) Put that wrap over her.

AMES. (*Starting to stoop to fix her slippers*) Won't you let me——

ISABEL. (*Stopping him*) Oh, no! You must go on *dancing*.

AMES. But I—— (*AMES stares all the time incredulously at ISABEL. So does AUNT ALLEN, across left.*)

ISABEL. I'm so much trouble, Johnnie—— (*Pointing to the slippers.*) Aren't they awful?

JOHNNIE. (*As he puts them on*) No'm, they're not. I prefer 'em myself! I very much prefer 'em! (*He puts her other slippers defiantly under his arms.*) You just lie back and rest, Miss Stuart. I'll look after you.

ISABEL. Thank you, Johnnie. (*She lies on sofa, head at right of sofa, facing center.*)

FLORENCE. Louder, Mattie!

(*MATTIE opens vocalion to its loudest. FLORENCE seizes AMES, and they dance.*)

JOHNNIE. If you can rest with all this going on?

(*AMES and FLORENCE dance over to left front of table, go around table and come to center.*)

ISABEL. That's right! That's right! (*Referring*

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to the dance.) Isn't it lovely to see the young people so happy?

(AMES and FLORENCE start to whirl around in center, AMES looking at ISABEL. ISABEL, as if beating time, saying, "One, two, one, two.")

CURTAIN

NOTE.—*This final scene will have to be worked out carefully in rehearsal, beginning slowly; and the sequence, as shown here, may need altering when it is worked out. The effect is to bring the curtain down not on a "curtain line" but upon a scene of movement and sound conveying the "situation." JOHNNIE is only earnest and indignantly sympathetic with ISABEL here, but the appearance of things is: Both gentlemen are anxious about ISABEL and that FLORENCE is amazed.*

ACT III

SCENE: *The scene is the same interior shown in the Second Act, the time is late in the afternoon—toward evening—of the same day. The outdoor light, seen through the sun-room windows, has a rosier amber than in the Second Act. A forerunning of the approaching sunset; but the stage is still bright with light.*

DISCOVERED: AUNT ELLEN, as in Act II, sits by the fireplace, which sends out a warm glow; she is crocheting. MATTIE, on hands and knees, is facing the cabinet up right. The doors of the cabinet are partly open, revealing shelves of old boxes; old ornaments of various kinds, small vases, silver porringers, etc.; two or three old pistols; rolled papers—old and tied with red ribbon; some old books. MATTIE is pawing carefully among these, apparently puzzled.

Scene to be played quietly and inconsequently; rather quickly.

(MATTIE discovered rubbing the inside of the left door of the cabinet. AUNT ELLEN comes down, center.)

MATTIE. It certainly ain't here, Miss Ellen.

AUNT ELLEN. But *that's* where it ought to be. Did she tell you to scrape that date off?

MATTIE. I wasn't to say, Miss Ellen. Anyway, it's only half the date was to be scraped off.

AUNT ELLEN. It's very singular! But the rest of

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it is more singular. (ISABEL *enters, left.*) Did you ask Aunt Isabel?

ISABEL. Did she ask me what, Ellen? (*She limps to center.*)

AUNT ELLEN. Oh, the poor thing! She's limping worse. It's very singular!

ISABEL. What is?

AUNT ELLEN. It's very singular, the Family Bible's missing.

ISABEL. Oh, is that all! (ISABEL *limps to sofa.*)

AUNT ELLEN. Is that "*all*"? Do you realize the date of my *birth* is written in that Bible?

ISABEL. (*Sits on sofa, lightly*) Oh, yes; yours is there, too, isn't it? I've always thought fathers were an inconsiderate class of men. When they have a baby they only think of themselves; they go and write down the date in a Bible, even when the baby's a girl. They don't stop to *think*.

AUNT ELLEN. (*Looking at her with an approach to suspicion*) What is the matter with you?

ISABEL. Do you think something *does* seem the matter with me? Do you *really*? (*She is pleased with the idea that "something" may really be the matter with her.*)

AUNT ELLEN. You haven't got upset this way for quite a long while now; but it certainly isn't the first time, is it, Mattie? (ISABEL *has her lace with her and begins to work.* AUNT ELLEN *doesn't turn her head to make this inquiry, but continues her chocheting.*)

MATTIE. (*Quickly and casually*) No'm; it happens every time she has a shooter. Last one was that Philadelphia man-widower; she half-killed him horse-back ridin'; and before him that awful youngish one from Buffalo; and then that *old* one——

ISABEL. (*Quickly, to check MATTIE's list of suitors*) Never mind the old one. Ellen, there's another Bible upstairs.

AUNT ELLEN. But I'm used to reading my daily chapter from this one.

ISABEL. Don't you suppose you'd find much the same ideas in both of 'em?

AUNT ELLEN. (*Sharply*) Aunt Isabel!

ISABEL. Yes, Ellen?

AUNT ELLEN. I suppose you treat me like a child because I'm only your niece!

ISABEL. (*Reproachfully*) Ellen, have I ever taken advantage of my position as your aunt?

AUNT ELLEN. (*Querulous*) A great many people have very little respect for nieces; and as I'm only your half-niece——

ISABEL. (*Taking her up indulgently*) As you're only my half-niece you have only half as much respect for me as you ought to have?

AUNT ELLEN. (*Severely going on*) I don't pretend to fathom your *purpose* in concealing the *Bible* from me——

ISABEL. (*Shaking her head*) Oh, I'm not sure that nieces ought to be allowed to look at all the pictures in *any* old Family Bible. . . . But of course I don't admit I did *hide* it.

AUNT ELLEN. (*Incensed, becoming stately as she goes left*) I decline to be treated like a child! (*She exits left.*)

MATTIE. She's on! (*Coming down center.*)

ISABEL. She's what?

MATTIE. She knows the Good Book never walked out o' there by itself.

ISABEL. (*Turning eagerly in her chair*) Did you do just what I told you to?

MATTIE. (*With a gesture to a chair, left center. She tells it quickly without "acting"*) Yes'm. I waited till he was settin' in here alone a bit ago—so I come in and begun to look around, and I says to myself like, the way you told me, "Well, that's funny," I says, talkin' to myself. "It's funny where

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sech a thing as that could get to. A great big old Family Bible!" I says. "*What'd* you say was missin'?" he says. So I says, "Excuse me. It's nothin' . . . Only the Family Bible; we always kept it in here." (*With a gesture to the cabinet.*) "So I know it must be around somewheres," I says. Well, he jumped right up. "My goodness!" he says. "Let me help you look for it!" he says.

ISABEL. Yes, Mattie? Did he look all over the room?

MATTIE. (*Calmly*) He pretty near took up the floor. Then he went out in the hall and looked under the stairs and under everything else. "Maybe somebody's usin' it fer jest a *while*," he says, "and they'll bring it back here where they got it." "Well," I says—I put this in myself; you didn't tell me to—"well," I says, "they might bring it back here, yes; or somebody might of put it up in the attic." "In the attic?" he says. "I hardly got time to go up there, though," I says. "I do take a terrible interest in Bibles," he says. "Do you think there's any objection to my goin' up in the attic to see?" he says. "Oh, no, sir," I says, "none at all." "Somebody might 'a' put it there, as you *say*," he says. "They often do," he says, "and if you think Miss Stuart wouldn't mind . . ." "Oh, no," I says, "I know she wouldn't. You just go ahead," I says.

ISABEL. Mattie! And he *did*?

MATTIE. Yes'm. I reckon he's still up there.

ISABEL. On the whole, he seems quite excited about it, then?

MATTIE. Well, I never see a man show so much energy tryin' to find the Good Book.

ISABEL. We all ought to be glad this has happened, Mattie.

MATTIE. Why ought we?

ISABEL. We ought to be glad to have such a religious man in the house.

MATTIE. (*Dryly, going left*) Yes'm. (*Reflectively*) I must say I don't blame you fer hidin' it—with all your ages—and the family scandal wrote out in it!

ISABEL. What "scandal"?

MATTIE. About your poor father, ma'am.

ISABEL. Good gracious, Mattie, it isn't a scandal for a man to marry a second time!

MATTIE. Yes'm. At his *terrible age*, it was.

ISABEL. Well, I never reproached him for it, because I shouldn't have been born if he hadn't! Have you seen my other case of needles, Mattie? (*Rises.*)

MATTIE. No'm. What I don't understand's why you wanted him to *know* it was missin'. (*She hopes to be told.*)

ISABEL. No, that's very true. You don't understand that, Mattie. (*Crosses left.*)

MATTIE. (*Opening the door to go out*) No'm. (*Blankly.*)

ISABEL. When he comes down—oh, *there's* that case of needles! (*She sees it on the table, left center, and steps toward it.*)

MATTIE. (*Warningly*) Sh! He is down!

ISABEL. Down *where*? (*She abandons her intention of getting the needles, though she is near them. She turns and goes quickly back, with almost no lameness—to the sofa and resumes her work. MATTIE stares, astonished.*)

MATTIE. I thought you was limpin' this afternoon?

ISABEL. (*Whispering across to her*) Sh! I am! It comes and goes. Is he there?

MATTIE. (*Peering out of the door and looking back, whispering*) He's lookin' under the hall sofy again! (*She coughs, steps back, and AMES enters, left. AMES comes in quickly, with the frown of a person intent on a serious search; his eye is on the cabinet, and he has come into the room to go there.*)

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He checks himself at sight of ISABEL by the fire. MATTIE observes them both with interest.)

AMES. (*Center*) Oh! Oh! How do you do?

ISABEL. (*Working*) How do you do?

AMES. I hope you're—better? (*He glances at the cabinet.*)

ISABEL. Oh, yes; it comes and goes; you know. (*Touches her knee.*)

AMES. (*In a sympathetic tone*) No, I don't; I've never had it, so far.

ISABEL. (*Rising and looking about*) Not "so far."

AMES. (*Rather eagerly*) Are you looking for something?

ISABEL. Yes, I *had* it a little while ago, too; it's stupid of me! (*Rises.*)

AMES. (*Eagerly, quickly, hoping she means the Bible*) Can't you remember where you put it? Did you have it in *here*?

ISABEL. Yes. (*She moves slowly and her lameness is now somewhat more apparent. MATTIE, kept by her curiosity at the door, observes her with enlarging eyes and an opening mouth. ISABEL goes on.*) Yes, I'm sure I had it in here—if I could only think where I put it. (*Crosses left.*)

AMES. (*Eagerly*) Let *me* look. You really shouldn't move about much, I'm afraid. (*He is already looking about.*)

ISABEL. (*Plaintively*) You're so kind! It is a little bothersome, at times. (*There is a faint sound like a choke from MATTIE, not mirth, but a moral amazement. ISABEL turns toward her, at this.*) That's all, Mattie. I shan't want you for anything more.

MATTIE. Yes'm. (*Exits left.*)

ISABEL. (*Concentrating*) If I could only think—it *seems* to me I left it *somewhere* over on this side of the room. (*The left side.*)

AMES. (*Dubiously*) I hardly think so. (*He glances behind a large wall chair.*) I already have looked all over this— (*Crosses to left to lower end of table.*)

ISABEL. (*With a little triumphant emphasis*) Why, there it is! On the table all the time!

AMES. (*Blankly*) On the table?

ISABEL. (*Pointing to the little case of needles*) Yes. Just where I left it, of course! (*He picks it up.*)

AMES. (*Blankly*) This? Is this what you mean?

ISABEL. (*Laughing at him*) Yes! My needles. What did you think I meant?

AMES. I? I didn't know exactly.

ISABEL. Then what were you looking for?

AMES. (*Quickly*) I was looking for your needles, too. I didn't know they were what you wanted, I mean to say, but I wanted to find them if *you* were looking for them.

ISABEL. I see. You didn't know you were looking for them, but you were. I'll take them, please.

AMES. Oh, yes. (*He hands them to her. They are about center, down.*)

ISABEL. Thank you. (*She has stretched out her arm to take the needles, looking at him gravely. Something in her look arrests him and he unconsciously retains his grasp of the little red case; so that for a moment or two their fingers are almost in contact upon it. Their eyes meet, and her expression for that moment becomes one of an almost revealed mockery. He starts slightly; the mockery deepens, and she laughs.*)

AMES. (*Nervously*) What are you laughing at?

ISABEL. (*Turning to go back to sofa*) It was so peculiar, your looking for something without knowing what you were looking for! (*She changes to a sudden little gasp.*) Oh!

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AMES. Are you in considerable pain? (*Comes to her.*)

ISABEL. It just comes and goes. (*She laughs again, gasps again, laughs once more as she goes to the chair.*)

AMES. (*Nervously*) Won't you lean on me?

ISABEL. (*As before*) No, no!

AMES. (*Anxiously*) Can't I get you something?

ISABEL. (*Sinking into sofa*) No; there isn't any in the house.

AMES. (*Coming toward her*) I'm so sorry!

ISABEL. (*Smiling*) It's gone now. It comes and goes. That is, it comes but it does *go*; you know—like most other things in the world! (*Looking up at him charmingly, wistfully for a moment.*)

AMES. I *must* say—your eyes——

ISABEL. Yes? My eyes? I think I remember your speaking of them this morning.

AMES. Your eyes——

ISABEL. (*Looking back at her work, speaks with a change to a matter-of-fact tone*) Ah, what were you going to say about them?

AMES. (*Set aback*) I was going to say—— (*He assumes a solicitous tone.*) I was going to *say*, don't you think you ought to get *advice* about using them for such fine work?

ISABEL. They've held out so well. I think now they'll last my time. Do you have any trouble with yours? (*Casually.*)

AMES. I? Oh, no. I use glasses *sometimes* for very fine print.

ISABEL. I'm so sorry.

AMES. (*Laughing nervously*) Oh, it isn't because of my a—— (*"Age," he means to say, but cuts it off.*) I mean it just *happened*.

ISABEL. (*Consolingly*) I know. Even *very* young people get these little astigmatisms. *They* don't mean anything.

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AMES. There's something I haven't had a chance to explain to you——

ISABEL. Please don't explain anything—especially if it's about a telegram.

AMES. But that telegram *wasn't*——

ISABEL. (*Declining to listen*) No, no! Poor man, you *had* to stay, didn't you? (*Affirmative.*)

AMES. (*Seriously*) I wanted to!

ISABEL. (*With light indulgence*) Of course. (*He turns to center.*) What have you been doing for the last hour or so?

AMES. I? (*He unconsciously looks upward, thinking of the attic.*) I've just been looking about. (*He goes to the cabinet up right. MATTIE has left one of the doors ajar.*) You have so many interesting things. (*He quickly and surreptitiously opens the door wider as he speaks and takes a hurried survey of that half of the shelves revealed by the open door. ISABEL turns her head only a little, and applies herself to her work. She knows what he is doing without looking directly at him.*)

ISABEL. (*As if absently*) Florence was with you?

AMES. (*Absently*) No; she went fishing in your brook with young Mr. White. (*He wishes to open the other door of the cabinet.*)

ISABEL. Fishing? (*She turns her head; and he moves down, away from the cabinet, with apparent carelessness.*) Did she wear her rubber boots?

AMES. (*Absently repeating*) "Her rubber boots?" (*Then with a sudden start, comes down right.*) I don't know! I don't know *what* her "foot-wear" was; I'm *really* not in the boot-and-shoe business: I'm a lawyer!

ISABEL. (*Consolingly, as she rises*) She won't be gone long. (*She goes toward up left as she speaks.*) I'm so glad you changed your mind about them.

AMES. About *them*? (*Front of sofa.*)

ISABEL. (*Nearing the door up left*) Yes, about

the new generation: the "brazen little hussies"! You frightened me last night about them!

AMES. Why, how'd I frighten you?

ISABEL. Why, I was afraid you mightn't like my great-niece. Under the *circumstances*, you see—well, that would have been too bad, wouldn't it? *(She gives him a glance of quick smiling mockery over her shoulder, and passes out of the door up left. He stares after her, perplexed; passes his hand hurriedly over his brow; then goes to the cabinet; opens its other door and stoops to look within. ISABEL re-enters down left, having gone out only to see if he would go to the cabinet. She sees him there as she comes in.)*

ISABEL. *(Apologetically)* I'm afraid—— *(AMES turns to her.)* I'm afraid I left my work here. *(She comes down toward right.)*

AMES. *(Embarrassed, moving hastily away from the cabinet)* Ah—I was—your work? Let me find it for you. *(In his nervousness he goes to the table, left center, to look for it.)*

ISABEL. Oh, no. Don't bother. I think I left it on the sofa. *(She reaches the chair.)* Yes. *(She sits on sofa.)* I think I'll stay here, after all, if you're sure I won't be interrupting you.

AMES. Interrupting me! Why, I'm *not* doing anything. What in the world do you mean?

ISABEL. You spoke of our having interesting things. I didn't want to interrupt your looking at them.

AMES. Oh! *(A puzzled "Oh, that's-what-you-meant" is what he expresses.)*

ISABEL. *(Placidly)* I noticed you were interested in that cabinet.

AMES. *(Somewhat relieved)* Yes; so I was. *(He goes to it and completes his investigation.)* Yes, indeed. *(He sees that the Bible is not there, and*

adds, in a blank tone) Yes, it's a very interesting old piece.

ISABEL. Do you think so?

AMES. I'm not an expert—on periods, but I'd call it a very fine, quaint old piece.

ISABEL. *(With a little too much serenity)* Yes, they had it made for a present to me on my fifteenth birthday.

AMES. Oh, oh! I see, it's a reproduction. It was made for you—your fifteenth birthday?

ISABEL. Yes; it had an inscription with the date on it.

AMES. *(Trying to conceal his sudden great interest)* It had? An inscription with the . . . where? *(He looks quickly over the top and sides of the cabinet as he speaks.)* Where's there any da—where's there any inscription? I don't see an inscription.

ISABEL. I think it's inside the door on the left.

AMES. *(Swinging the door open instantly and putting on his glasses)* On the left. Yes. It says: "To Isabel Stuart. On her sixteenth birthday, June thirteenth." *(He begins the reading rapidly, but slows up and looks more and more closely at the inscription, which is in small gilt letters; and the concluding words are slow with bafflement. He repeats:)* "Fifteenth birthday. June thirteenth." That's all it says. The rest seems to have been—uh—scraped off.

ISABEL. *(Lightly)* Oh, that was only the year they gave it to me. I suppose the figures have been worn off—with time. Do you think it's an interesting piece of cabinet making?

AMES. *(Blankly, giving up the figures)* Yes, very. A very interesting piece indeed, I should say!

ISABEL. *(As if a little absently)* Have you ever noticed how disappointing most fine quaint old pieces are when you come to look inside of 'em?

AMES. Yes, that's true; they often are. (*Glances at cabinet.*)

ISABEL. We try to do better with that one; we keep relics in it; daguerreotypes, all sorts of things—the Family Bible and—— (*Then, as by a casual thought*) Oh—Mattie tells me it's *missing*—by the way. She said you were so kind about it.

AMES. (*Flustered*) She did? She said—— (*Comes to center.*)

ISABEL. (*Smiling gratefully*) She said you helped her look for it.

AMES. Oh, that was nothing. Nothing at all!

ISABEL. She said you were *so* kind.

AMES. Oh, no! Not at all!

ISABEL. (*With benevolent appreciation*) It's a little thing, of course, to stop and help a servant like that, but it's the little things that show our characters. We learn that in Sunday-school, don't we? It was so thoughtful of you to stop and help poor Mattie like that!

AMES. (*Hurriedly*) Oh, no; you mustn't praise me for it. It was nothing at all.

ISABEL. (*Smiling wistfully and observing him as if rather wondering*) Do you think you seem a little different to-day, from last night?

AMES. Oh, no. Not at all.

ISABEL. Don't *you* notice it?

AMES. Why, no, of course not. Not at all.

ISABEL. Last night you were—well, you were quite—fluent! But all day you've hardly said anything except, "Oh, no, not at all, of course not" or "*Nothing*, oh, nothing at all."

AMES. Oh, no, not at—that is to say, I——

ISABEL. (*Rises—sympathetically*) Is it because you can't *think* of anything else to say?

AMES. Oh, no, not at—no! No, it isn't because of that; not at—not a *bit*!

ISABEL. (*Solicitously*) You do seem to be *think*-

ing. I can see you're doing *that*; but why don't you tell me *what* you're thinking?

AMES. Because I'm really not.

ISABEL. You're not thinking?

AMES. No. Not *about* anything, I mean.

ISABEL. Is it something you won't tell me, or something you *can't* tell me?

AMES. It's nothing. It's nothing at—nothing *whatever!* Nothing *whatever!*

ISABEL. (*Sympathetically*) Can't you think of *anything* else to say?

AMES. (*Desperately, yet feebly*) Why, yes, of course. Of course I can. Anything at all; anything. (*Goes around table and crosses to left center.*)

ISABEL. You don't think *I've* changed since last night, do you? You aren't *disappointed* in me, are you?

AMES. Why, of course I'm not. Not at—certainly not. Why, no; not—

ISABEL. "Not at all!" "Certainly not!" And you haven't changed, have you?

AMES. Why, no—not at—

ISABEL. (*Going nearer to him, reproachfully*) Not at all! Why, of course not! Not at *all!* Nothing whatever! (*She turns up.*)

AMES. (*Flustered*) What on earth do you mean?

ISABEL. Why, that's what you were going to say, wasn't it? You haven't changed, have you? (*Finishing with quick reproach.*)

AMES. Why, of course not. Not at—no! I wouldn't!

ISABEL. (*Approvingly*) That's all I meant! You wouldn't! When you've done a thing, you're the sort of man that stands by it, no matter what!

AMES. (*Astounded, breaking out*) My soul! I believe you're making fun of me!

ISABEL. Why, of *course* I'm not! Not at all!

AMES. (*With plaintive vehemence*) But you say one thing and you seem to mean something else, and you seem to mean one thing and you say another! No wonder I can't say anything but "Not at all" and "Nothing at all"! (*Crosses right.*)

ISABEL. But, don't you see, I'm just trying to get us better acquainted with each other! I think we ought to be, don't you?

AMES. (*Subsiding to feebleness*) I should think it would be a good thing, yes, indeed.

ISABEL. Let me see. I've told you why I never married. Isn't there something in particular—isn't there something else you'd like to know? Can't you think of anything at all? (*At each one of these interrogatories he seems about to speak; then checks himself and dumbly shakes his head. She insists.*) You're sure there isn't anything? (*She comes down closer, facing him. He shakes his head again.*) And you feel profoundly happy?

AMES. (*With a manful effort*) Yes, indeed!

ISABEL. (*With a culmination of bitterness but not in a bitter tone*) I believe that's the noblest effort I ever heard any man make! (*Emotion chokes her a very little bit.*)

AMES. Effort?

ISABEL. (*Covering her emotion by speaking quickly, but her voice shakes a little. She goes up center*) Yes! It was! But don't be afraid! Mr. Ames! I really didn't expect you to be different from other men; you've done your best and you shall have your reward!

AMES. What "reward"?

ISABEL. (*A little chokingly, as she looks out up right*) I think Johnnie White's bringing it. I think it's a message. (*She turns aside with some pathos.*)

AMES. What "message"?

(JOHNNIE enters gloomily up right. He wears an

old knickerbocker suit, rough, muddy shoes, and he leaves an old rod and basket near the door. He comes down center and looks coldly at AMES.)

JOHNNIE. (*With a movement of his head to up right, speaks to AMES deliberately*) She's—uh—she's sittin' out on a limb of a willow tree that sticks out over the water and she wants you to come and look at her.

AMES. (*Frowning*) *Who's sitting on a limb and wants me to come and look at her?*

JOHNNIE. Her.

AMES. "Her?"

JOHNNIE. (*Coldly*) I expect you know I mean Florence by this time, Mr. Ames.

AMES. (*Incredulous*) *She sent you for me?*

JOHNNIE. (*With the same even gloom*) She got herself out on this limb and she looked over and took a look at herself in the water. Then she said, "Well, I do look right cunning out here, don't I?" "Are we goin' to do any fishin'?" I asked her. Then she said, "I wish Mr. Ames was here." "What for? To look at you on that limb?" I asked her. "I'll go get him for you." "Don't let him know I *sent* for him," she told me. "No, I won't," I told her. "He wouldn't even guess when he comes out and *looks* at you that you want him to! Oh, no; he wouldn't!" That limb she's sittin' on, it's pretty old, and it might not hold her up *too* long, so don't you guess you'd better go, Mr. Ames?

AMES. I?

ISABEL. (*Gently*) Yes, please do.

AMES. (*A little sharply, to JOHNNIE*) I think it would be much better if you'd go back and get her down from that limb and go ahead with your fishing, Mr. White. (*Turns away to right.*)

JOHNNIE. (*Still in gloom*) Fishin'? *She never*

meant *that kind*. I think you better go, because—from what I know of her she'll sit there either till you come and see how cunning she looks or else falls in the water.

ISABEL. Won't you please go and bring her in?

AMES. (*Doggedly*) Oh, certainly, if you ask me. (*He goes abruptly up right.*)

ISABEL. (*Hurriedly, graciously*) Of course I don't mean for you to hurry *back* with her. (*To piano.*)

AMES. (*With some coldness*) Thank you! (*Exits up right. ISABEL looks after him rather pathetically.*)

JOHNNIE. She's—she's goin' to get him, Miss Stuart. (*Up center.*)

ISABEL. (*Turning down blankly. Sits right of table left. JOHNNIE comes down center.*) What?

JOHNNIE. She's made up her mind, and there's just one thing my life's taught me, and that is when a girl like her really starts after an older man—well, you know she's goin' to make him lift her down from that tree.

ISABEL. (*Quietly*) Oh, yes, certainly.

JOHNNIE. (*With a sudden change, coming to her solemnly*) Miss Stuart; I'd like to see a great deal more of *you* in the—in the future—as—it—were—than we have in the—in the *past* as—it—were.

ISABEL. (*Quiet wonder*) Why, what are you talking about, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE. What I've been thinkin'. Why, you take a person's *character*, especially you take a *woman's* character, and no matter what's the difference between her age and some younger man that thinks a lot of her character age, because she's settled down and quit her foolishness the way you have, Miss Stuart, well, it's the difference between a character like that and one that's got to make a collection of every old man she *sees*, no matter what his age is, so what I mean; why, this bein' used just for a mes-

senger boy, I better *cure* myself and get over it, and the best way'd be to find some character I could look up to and get a sacred feeling about.

ISABEL. (*Incredulous*) Do you mean *me*, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE. Yes'm; that's why I'd like to see more of you in the *future*—as—it—were. Will you?

ISABEL. Johnnie White, what *are* you up to?

JOHNNIE. Well, you've read *Henry Esmond*—or have you?

ISABEL. Yes.

JOHNNIE. Well, *he* had that sacred feeling the way a younger man does about a woman some older than he was, wasn't he, didn't he? (*Affirmative.*)

ISABEL. (*She jumps up*) You funny, *funny* boy! You think you'll make Florence jealous!

JOHNNIE. (*Earnestly*) No'm; I don't care much whether she is or not, not much. I *mean* it!

ISABEL. (*Laughing*) You mean you're a little cross with her for a few minutes, till she brings you around.

JOHNNIE. No'm, I *mean* it! I expect it would do her good—— D'you see the way she looked at me when I said I *preferred* to, this morning? But what I mean is, about *you*, why, I *mean* it!

ISABEL. (*Still amused*) You don't mean you've got a sacred feeling about me, Johnnie—White!

JOHNNIE. Well, there aren't many people'd understand, but I'd *like* to think I've got kind o' sacred feeling about you, instead of just a messenger boy, because I look up to you, because you're so *different* from her. Won't you let me?

ISABEL. (*Laughing, but rather touched*) What nonsense!

JOHNNIE. (*Pathetically in earnest*) Yes, but won't you? You know how she acts. *Won't* you let me?

ISABEL. (*With amused indulgence, putting her*

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arm lightly, affectionately, round his shoulders
Why, yes, if you want to, you dear thing!

(FLORENCE enters briskly up right just on the moment, but halts abruptly. She wears a "fishing costume" of a most effective kind.)

JOHNNIE. (*Fervently*) I do want to! (*He takes her other hand.*)

FLORENCE. (*Laughing rather loudly, with some disquiet of mind*) Well, of all the foolish sights—what are you two doing?

JOHNNIE. (*Giving her a very short glance over his shoulder, speaks very gently and solemnly to ISABEL*) Let's sit over there. (*He means the sofa, across the room. They are left center. He leads her. ISABEL is controlling amusement, but is rather tenderly pleased and touched by JOHNNIE'S absurdity.*)

ISABEL. (*As they move toward right*) Where is Mr. Ames?

FLORENCE. He's bringin' my fishin' traps. (*Then sharply*) What is the—?

JOHNNIE. Lean on me. I prefer it!

FLORENCE. Is Aunt Isabel's rheumatism worse?

ISABEL. Oh, no! (*Emphatically on "oh."*)

JOHNNIE. (*Quietly*) No. It isn't lameness. (*He looks continually at ISABEL.*)

FLORENCE. Then what is it?

ISABEL. (*As they reach the sofa*) Did you want me to sit here with you, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE. (*Solemnly*) Yes. Let's sit here. This is the place I meant. (*They sit.*)

FLORENCE. Well, of all the foolish-looking people I ever saw— (*She is moving up center as if to go out, but stops as JOHNNIE speaks. Then goes down right to chair below fireplace.*)

JOHNNIE. She couldn't understand. It's the dif-

ference in your character. She couldn't *ever* understand. (ISABEL *covers her mouth with her hand and clenched kerchief.*)

FLORENCE. (*Puzzled and beginning to be annoyed*) What *are* you two—it really *was* a little queer, Aunt Isabel!

ISABEL. What was queer, dear?

FLORENCE. (*Laughing rather uncomfortably*) Why, to walk in here and find you *locked* in an embrace with Johnnie White!

ISABEL. (*Choking down her amusement*) Oh, dear! Did you *see* that, Florence?

FLORENCE. (*Still laughing thinly*) And after last *night*—well, I guess the less said about *that* the better!

ISABEL. Yes, indeed, dear!

FLORENCE. (*Getting sharper*) It seems to me your conduct is certainly open to interpretation.

ISABEL. Yes, Florence, I'm afraid I'm a wild thing!

FLORENCE. Why, you've got poor Mr. Ames so upset he isn't *normal*.

ISABEL. Isn't he? (*With more serious eagerness.*)

FLORENCE. I happened to be on the branch of a tree and he just said to "come down and go in the house, you were worrying about me." (*She imitates a brisk, rather peremptory, tone.*)

ISABEL. (*Quickly*) Did he?

FLORENCE. (*Not "ugly," but reproachful*) I don't believe you want *anybody* to be nice to me; you just want to flirt with every man in the world, yourself! (*Starts up right.*)

ISABEL. But I don't *know* 'em all!

JOHNNIE. She couldn't understand!

FLORENCE. (*Very sharply, as this repetition goads her*) I couldn't understand *what*? (*Comes back down right.*)

JOHNNIE. (*To her coldly*) Did you ever read *Henry Esmond*?

FLORENCE. No, I didn't! (*Sits on arm of arm-chair.*)

JOHNNIE. I expect not. You *aren't* intellectual particularly, Florence. It's by William Makepeace Thackeray.

FLORENCE. Well, what o' that?

JOHNNIE. Oh, nothing. Only he was kind o' carried away with a light weight for a while.

FLORENCE. This William Makepeace was?

JOHNNIE. (*Serenely*) No. Henry Esmond was. It didn't last very long. Some novels are a good deal like life. (*To ISABEL*) *She* couldn't understand.

FLORENCE. (*Raising her voice incredulously*) Are you in *earnest*?

JOHNNIE. (*Ignoring her*) If she lived to be a hundred she couldn't understand, could she?

ISABEL. (*Whimsically, gently, to him*) I don't believe she could!

(*AMES enters up right, carrying FLORENCE's rods and basket.*)

FLORENCE. (*Stung*) No! Well, if I *do* live to be a hundred I hope I'll understand how to behave at that age!

(*AMES turns to go out again, right, as if to avoid a family scene, saying, "I beg your pardon."*)

ISABEL. (*Seeing him*) Oh, don't go, Mr. Ames. (*AMES comes down center.*) It's nothing. (*She is gently cheerful.*)

JOHNNIE. (*To FLORENCE*) Aren't you ashamed *any*?

FLORENCE. Me? For saying if *I* live to be a hun-

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dred I hope I'll know better than to let mere adolescents talk much to me! Golly, no!

ISABEL. (*To AMES*) I'm afraid she means her great-aunt.

FLORENCE. I should say I do! (*Crosses center.*) Why, last month there was a three-times widower hangin' round here; he wasn't four *minutes* under eighty, and a week before it was a child about nineteen. Last night it was Mr. Ames and *now* it's Johnnie White; and they *began* with a fond *embrace*! I *saw* it!

ISABEL. (*To AMES*) Yes, she did!

FLORENCE. Sometimes she doesn't act more'n sixteen! (*Crosses right, back of sofa.*)

ISABEL. (*Rises*) There, Mr. Ames, you have me!

AMES. I beg your pardon!

ISABEL. My portrait! Drawn by my *great-niece*! I flirt with three-times widowers and with children of nineteen and with you and with Johnnie White, and Johnnie and I began with a fond embrace. To finish it! I'm a hundred years old and I'm sixteen years old! So there, my friend, you *know* me! (*She curtsies to him, and moves rather quickly toward the door, left, limping a little.*)

JOHNNIE. (*Quickly, with a movement toward her*) Won't you come back and sit here some more?

ISABEL. (*Checking him, smiling*) No; not now. But you can run home and change your clothes and come back to dinner.

JOHNNIE. (*Solemnly eager*) Can I?

ISABEL. Yes, you can; and I'll be *waiting* for you, Johnnie White! (*She gives AMES a little sudden bob of a nod, which seems to daze him, and exits quickly, left. AMES sits blankly—right of table left.*)

FLORENCE. (*Right*) Well, of all the darn conduct I ever in my life—

JOHNNIE. (*Center—coldly*) Of course it's mys-

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terious to you: you couldn't even be *expected* to understand. (*Goes up center.*)

FLORENCE. (*Coming a step toward him, irritated, speaking all in a breath*) What is the matter with you? (*Follows JOHNNIE up center.*)

JOHNNIE. Nothing you'd be able to under——

FLORENCE. (*Almost shouting*) Stop it! If you say that to me *again*——

JOHNNIE. I want to say just one last thing to you!

FLORENCE. Oh, you do, do you?

JOHNNIE. It's simply just only this: Hark! A man really does like to have somebody to look up to!

FLORENCE. Well, you don't haf to be *silly* about everybody you look up to, do you?

JOHNNIE. (*With a pleasant thought about it and the manner assuming that this thought is beyond her*) Well, I don't know. I might. Why, yes. Yes—I think a man might feel a good deal that way.

FLORENCE. (*Incredulously*) What?

JOHNNIE. (*Easily, having put her in her place*) Excuse me, I think that's about all I care to say for the time being. (*He goes up and gets his rods and basket.*)

FLORENCE. Why, you darned little——

JOHNNIE. (*With easy superior carelessness, but not smiling*) I may see you later in the evening for a moment or so, if I have time. (*Near door up right.*)

FLORENCE. (*Quickly, sharply*) Why, you just told her you're coming back to——

JOHNNIE. (*In the same tone as his last speech*) To dinner—yes—yes. I said I may see you across the table or somewhere, prob'ly; thanking you for your kind attention, I beg to remain, et cetera, et cetera. (*Exits up right without smiling. Start to dim outside lights.*)

FLORENCE. Why, you—— (*Then turns indig-*



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nantly to AMES. *(Comes down center)* Did you ever know any other girl that had an aunt like my aunt?

AMES. *(Shaking his head seriously)* No—no—I never did!

FLORENCE. *(Gesturing to the door of JOHNNIE'S exit)* Why, even that poor little *child*—it's terrible! What do you *think about* her?

AMES. "What do I"—I don't know; I don't know! I don't know anything *about* her! Not a single thing! *(The scene is rather quick.)*

FLORENCE. *(Viciously)* Well, I think I know *one* thing about her.

AMES. You're her niece and you *think* you know *one* thing about her!

FLORENCE. I believe she's been a coquette from the day she was born!

AMES. *(Repeating)* "From the day she was——" *(He jumps up sharply.)* Have you happened to see the Family Bible?

FLORENCE. *What* Family Bible?

AMES. Your family's. The one they keep in here!

FLORENCE. Well, for heaven's sake, what would I be doin' with it?

AMES. I don't know.

FLORENCE. What do you want it for?

AMES. What do I *want* it for! *(He recovers himself.)* I wanted to see if it's a first edition! I collect first editions!

FLORENCE. You collect first editions of the Bible?

AMES. Why, no.

FLORENCE. I thought not. *(Sits on sofa.)* Mr. Ames, do you believe an older man's feeling for a younger woman is deeper than a younger woman's feeling for an older man?

AMES. I don't know.

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FLORENCE. Won't you sit here?

AMES. Very well. (*Sits on sofa, left of FLORENCE.*)

FLORENCE. Before I settle down or anything, I think I ought to have the experience of a serious affair with some older man. (*Start to dim the stage lights here, very slowly.*)

AMES. Oh!

FLORENCE. (*Giving him a lovely smile*) Oh, dear! I wish I had my slippers on instead of these. (*She holds up her booted feet plaintively.*)

AMES. (*Rising nervously*) Oh, I think you look very well in boots!

FLORENCE. (*Frowning*) They're so heavy. I do wish I had my—— (*She is interrupted by the opening of the door, left. MATTIE enters there, bringing a pair of pretty patent leather slippers. FLORENCE, staring.*) Well, for heaven's sake; just as I was sayin' I wanted 'em! (*AMES sees the slippers in MATTIE's hand, turns and strides hurriedly up to the sun-room. FLORENCE goes on*) How in the—— (*She checks herself and at a thought speaks decisively*) Mattie! That's no mere coincidence!

MATTIE. (*Bringing the slippers and setting them on the floor before FLORENCE*) No'm. Your Aunt Isabel told me to listen at the door——

FLORENCE. What? (*AMES turns sharply and stares at MATTIE.*)

MATTIE. (*Going on casually*) Your Aunt Isabel told me to listen at the door till I heard you begin talkin' about changin' your footwear and then to bring 'em in for you.

FLORENCE. She told you to listen at the——

MATTIE. (*Casually*) Yes'm; she says to be perfectly honorable and pay no attention till I heard the word "slippers," and she says the rest of the conversation wouldn't be worth my while, anyway. (*Exits left.*)

FLORENCE. (*Frowning, puzzled. Stares thoughtfully at the closing door, then turns front*) Well, if that isn't queer! (*Emphatically.*)

AMES. No! It's no queerer than anything else! (*Coming down right.*)

FLORENCE. Well, after all, now that my slippers are here—

AMES. (*Nervously*) I don't think I'd—I don't think I'd better!

FLORENCE. (*Rising, concentrating disapprovingly*) Well, what do you think?

AMES. (*With vehemence*) Nothing! (*He goes up to the sun-room. The light outside has grown rosier and inside it is a little darker. The glow from the fireplace brightens. AUNT ELLEN enters, left. She has changed her dress for a dark silk, which has a suggestion of state about it.*)

AUNT ELLEN. (*Left*) Florence, do you consider that an appropriate costume for the drawing-room?

FLORENCE. (*Right—peevishly*) It ain't one!

AUNT ELLEN. "Ain't?" "Ain't?"

FLORENCE. No, it ain't! It ain't a drawing-room; it's a living-room! If people can't be young again, anyhow they *can* be modern!

AUNT ELLEN. (*Turning to go out again, left*) I will withdraw from the room until you—

FLORENCE. (*Picking up her slippers*) Murder! Don't go—I apologize, gosh—I apologize without the gosh—I'm going— Oh, murder, I'm tired!

AUNT ELLEN. Tired! Why, you haven't been doing anything compared to your Aunt Isabel.

FLORENCE. (*Going slowly and wearily up left with a gloomy sigh*) It seems to me as if I just spent my life dressing! It's all so savorless! (*Suddenly she begins to sing brightly, breaks into a skip, calls back sweetly*) See you later, William! (*Exits up left, skipping and singing. AMES is surprised. AUNT*

ELLEN looks after FLORENCE disapprovingly, very slightly shaking her head.)

AUNT ELLEN. You must overlook it, William. Good gracious! I mean—— (She corrects herself hastily.) Mr. Ames!

AMES. Oh, don't bother.

AUNT ELLEN. (Left center) She belongs to a very different generation from the one you and I grew up with.

AMES. (Right center. Set back by her "you and I.") Ah—yes. Yes, indeed!

AUNT ELLEN. (Going slowly toward right) You and I were taught a very different behavior toward our elders.

AMES. (Gloomily) Yes, the—the previous—ah—generations had a very different training, though this one certainly has charm, too. I wonder how many of—uh—us, though, can remember just what we were like in our own youth.

AUNT ELLEN. (Somewhat surprised) Why, I recall my own, perfectly.

AMES. (Brightening) That's remarkab-ully—— (He changes the word to "remarkably" with a slight vocal struggle in the midst of it.) Pleasant. Your—ah—aunt, Miss Stuart does, too, and about public events she remembers wonderfully; we were reminiscing this morning; all about Hayes—and Wheeler and Samuel J. Tilden. Do you happen to remember that campaign?

AUNT ELLEN. (Looking at him over her shoulder; she is touching some music sheets on the piano) Why, of course.

AMES. (Rather dismayed) Well, she said she thought it was a terrible thing, Hayes—and—Wheeler's not getting elected.

AUNT ELLEN. (With spirit) They were elected. Anybody that says they weren't is a—a despicable Democrat!

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AMES. (*Hastily*) Oh, I think they were myself. (*Feebly hopeful.*) I only wondered—I wasn't just able to recall what year that campaign was— (*He puts a rising, plaintive interrogative upon this.*)

AUNT ELLEN. It was in 1876, the same year as the Philadelphia Exposition.

AMES. In 1876—oh, yes; it was—ah—a historical reference—I see.

AUNT ELLEN. Historical? I went to that exposition myself.

AMES. (*He looks at his watch with another feeble murmur of plaintive laughter*) I'm afraid I—I suppose I'd better be—yes—ah, I suppose I'd better— (*He goes awkwardly left and glances upward, thinking of going to his room upstairs.*) I'd better—ah—I suppose I'd better make—ah— (*At the door*) Well, I—

AUNT ELLEN. (*Inquiring rather shortly*) Yes?

AMES. (*Wiping his forehead hurriedly*) Well—thank you. Uh— (*Exit, dazedly, left.*)

(AUNT ELLEN sits at the piano and begins to play rather softly; she has a fine "touch" and plays with feeling. The light outdoors is the final rosi-ness of sunset; the firelight sends forth a broad rosy glow; but the rest of the scene is darkened as she plays through an old-fashioned melody. She has played about a dozen bars when a figure enters up left in the sun-room. It is ISABEL, but she is not distinctly seen. The glow up, beyond the sun-room windows, is behind her, and it is not until she reaches the table, left center, that the firelight falls upon her. She has changed her dress for another suggesting a gayer "smart-ness" than that previously worn in the act. She still suggests the slight lameness. She is carrying a large and heavy old book. When she reaches the table, the firelight falls on her and we

should get a gleam of jewels. She opens the Bible upon the table, and lets it remain open.)

AUNT ELLEN. (*As ISABEL reaches the table*) Is that you, Isabel? (*She does not turn her head.*)

ISABEL. Yes, go on playing, dear. (*She crosses to the fireplace, using her cane, and sits, gazing into the fire. There is a pause, the piano continuing, and then their talk goes on through the playing.*)

AUNT ELLEN. My old tunes are better than Florence's, aren't they? I think music was best of all in my day.

ISABEL. (*Gently*) No. It was best in my day. (*Crosses right.*)

AUNT ELLEN. No; I think it *began* to fall off by the time you came along. Music was best when—My day was the best.

ISABEL. (*Sits in armchair at fireplace*) Florence will say that some day. Music is best in each one's "day." What a pleasant thing that is; that we all of us see, afterward, that our first youth was best!

AUNT ELLEN. It isn't pleasant to see *anything* afterward.

ISABEL. Well, then, we can always look forward to—something—can't we?

AUNT ELLEN. (*Struck by this*) Oh! (*Her hands pause on the keys and she glances round for a moment at ISABEL.*) Oh, I understand what you mean. He was in here a while ago trying to find out. You know what I mean.

ISABEL. (*Serenely*) He didn't ask you, though.

AUNT ELLEN. No. You can see he'd be *nice* under any circumstances.

ISABEL. (*With a little regret*) "Nice?" Why, he's the bravest man I've ever seen. He's too plucky to withdraw—some remarks he made to me last night!

AUNT ELLEN. (*Plays a bar or two—then gravely*)

I wonder if I oughtn't to stop calling you "Aunt" Isabel.

ISABEL. Why? I *am* your aunt.

AUNT ELLEN. My *half*-aunt.

ISABEL. Isn't that plenty?

AUNT ELLEN. I've always liked calling you "Aunt Isabel" for *one* reason; nobody'd think I'm too old to be alive while I've still got an aunt. But it mightn't be consistent now.

ISABEL. Why mightn't it?

AUNT ELLEN. (*Very seriously, not playing for the moment*) Well, if anything should *happen*—I really shouldn't *know* how to begin calling Mr. Ames "Uncle William."

ISABEL. Never mind, dear. It *won't* happen.

AUNT ELLEN. (*Stops playing and turns*) I *never* could call Mr. Ames "Uncle." (*She is very serious.*)

ISABEL. (*Thoughtfully*) You *might* call him "Nephew." (*Rises.*)

AUNT ELLEN. Pooh! (*She plays softly.*)

ISABEL. Why not? Isn't Florence what all men want? Think of father; mother was only nineteen or so when he married her, and he was sixty-five.

AUNT ELLEN. Poor grandfather's weakness in marrying a girl as your mother was oughtn't to be. (*She plays again.*)

ISABEL. (*Sits on sofa*) Yes; but there it is. We're like Portia's caskets, we women, and the men come to choose without knowing what they'll find. Silver-and-gold, that's first youth, and it ought to have been written of that silver-and-gold casket: "Who chooses me shall choose what *every* man desires!" But if any man comes to choose *me*—well, a woman past twenty-eight is a thousand—I'll show him only lead!

AUNT ELLEN. I never heard before of a woman that *teased* a man to make him think she was *older*

than she was. And if it isn't to make him feel better when he finds out——

ISABEL. No, I've just told you why.

AUNT ELLEN. Oh, you can give all the pretty reasons you want to, but I know. You thought you'd test him, and you've been punishing him for even daring to wonder how old you are. (ISABEL rises to protest, saying, "Oh, I——") And he's beginning to suspect. Think how pretty dancing was in my day. (She begins to play an old waltz.)

ISABEL. They were pretty, the old waltzes.

AUNT ELLEN. (Her memory of the music faltering) How did that go there? (She tries to remember by singing it.) La, la, la——

ISABEL. (Rising) No, it's this. (She hums it and beats time, moving a few waltz steps but keeping to a hint of her lameness.) Yes. That's it. (She hums and begins to waltz slowly in the same manner as before. ISABEL falls a little and a little more into the spirit of the waltz, never wholly abandoning the hint of lameness; the waltz-time is rather slow but quickens a little and almost imperceptibly ISABEL moves in and out of the firelight glow as she dances, and her scarf floats, following her. JOHNNIE WHITE enters, at the door, left, and stands looking on without surprise. ISABEL sees him, but only nods and continues. He wears a dinner coat.)

JOHNNIE. Don't you want a partner?

ISABEL. (Coming toward him) Johnnie White, do you know the old waltz?

JOHNNIE. Yes'm. (Without losing her step she lets her left hand fall lightly upon his shoulder; he catches her step and they dance. The waltz-time is now a little quicker, and AUNT ELLEN plays it with great pleasure. ISABEL dances with a greater abandon until she has almost forgotten the hint of lameness. The sun-room is so dark that the opening of the door up left is unperceived. AMES, who has

changed to a dinner coat, enters there, and stands dumbfounded. FLORENCE enters just behind him and comes forward.)

FLORENCE. (*Exclaiming loudly—crosses to up right above fireplace*) Well, for heaven's sake! What are you doin' now?

ISABEL. (*Startled as she sees AMES*) Oh! (*She at once remembers her lameness. They stop dancing down right. ISABEL goes to center. JOHNNIE stays down right, below fireplace.*)

ISABEL. I—I'm afraid I forgot myself for the moment—I—you oughtn't to have tempted me, Johnnie. It might be—dangerous—

AMES. (*Striding down to her*) Will you dance with me—Isabel?

ISABEL. (*A little breathless*) What?

AMES. Will you dance with me—Isabel? (*ISABEL looks at him incredulously.*)

ISABEL. Dance with you, Mr. Ames?

AMES. Yes. I remember the old waltzes.

ISABEL. But perhaps—you don't realize how old they are—or how lame I am?

AMES. I don't care. Won't you dance with me?

ISABEL. Yes. (*She puts her left arm on his shoulder, as she did with JOHNNIE, and with a much more pronounced lameness than before, and in very slow time, they begin to waltz, AUNT ELLEN playing softly. As they dance.*) So you and I are in the fashion again. They say everybody dances all the time nowadays.

AMES. (*With profound earnestness*) I don't know anything except when I saw you dancing I wanted to dance with you. I do.

ISABEL. Do you? No matter how slowly?

AMES. (*Crossly*) Yes, I do!

ISABEL. But Florence would like to dance with you again.

AMES. What nonsense!

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ISABEL. (*Suddenly radiant*) Can't you play any faster than *that*, Ellen? Why don't you turn the lights up, Florence? (*AUNT ELLEN plays suddenly with greater spirit. FLORENCE snaps on the lights and is revealed to be laughing inextinguishably.*)

FLORENCE. (*Slapping JOHNNIE'S back with her other hand in her extreme jocosity*) My! But those ole-fashioned dances are funny! Don't they look crazy!

ISABEL. (*Happily calling to her*) Do we? (*She discards her lameness entirely during the next few measures. The two dance like happy experts of eighteen. They look at each other like lovers. FLORENCE ceases to laugh and becomes mystified. So does JOHNNIE. They stare, with their mouths open. Finally FLORENCE speaks with the emphasis of complete puzzlement.*)

FLORENCE. Well, just look at 'em lookin' at each other!

JOHNNIE. (*Grinning, but speaking indignantly to her*) Ain't you got any sense?

(*AUNT ELLEN lifts her left hand from the keys in a passionate gesture, not ceasing to play with her right. As her back is obliquely to front and right her left hand is toward FLORENCE and JOHNNIE.*)

FLORENCE. (*Inquiring poignantly the meaning of the gesture*) What? (*AUNT ELLEN repeats the passionate gesture. FLORENCE is more mystified and also somewhat petulant.*) Well, I—— (*JOHNNIE seizes her hand and drags her quickly off up right.*)

ISABEL. (*Not stopping*) I'm afraid we must stop.

AMES. No!

ISABEL. I mustn't wear you out. (*Upon this, without looking at them, AUNT ELLEN abruptly stops*

playing in the middle of a measure. She does not look at them at all, but goes quickly up and straight off left without turning. They are unconscious of her, and seem even unconscious that the piano has stopped or that they have ceased to dance. They have come to a halt directly up of the table left center and close by it, looking at each other.)

AMES. (*Speaking angrily the instant they and the music stop*) I want to tell you just this: you've been mocking me every second since we first met in that God-forsaken railroad station.

ISABEL. No!

AMES. (*Fiercely*) You have! Every instant!

ISABEL. Never! Never once! Never! Never!

AMES. You were at it half the day yesterday and as much of the night as you could stay awake and all day to-day! But it won't do!

ISABEL. When did you decide I was mocking you?

AMES. I thought so all day, but I knew it when I saw you dancing with that boy!

ISABEL. Do you mind my dancing with boys?

AMES. No! I'm not jealous. (*His tone is as angry as before.*) But it came over me! You've just mocked me!

ISABEL. Can't you imagine a woman's being a little nervous about *one* man's knowing how often the earth's gone round the sun since she was born?

AMES. (*With feeling*) Am I the one man?

ISABEL. That's why women are afraid of *every*-body's knowing; it might reach the one man. That's the reason a woman *cares* about her age; *he* might care! (*She touches the open Bible on the table.*) Look, Mr. Ames! I'll turn my back while you're looking. (*She walks away from him slowly.* AMES *puts one hand on Bible, but keeps looking at ISABEL.*)

ISABEL. (*As he does this, her voice tremulous*) On the left hand page you'll find all of papa's de-

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scendants by his first wife. On the right-hand page you'll see where the poor old darling married again—such a *heathenish* time—afterward——

AMES. That's what I thought. That's why I was looking for your Bible.

ISABEL. Underneath is where you'll find me. (*Her voice trembles a little more.*) Have you found me?

AMES. (*With great feeling under his laughter*) Yes, I have! (*Closes Bible.*)

ISABEL. (*Weakly*) Oh, you didn't look? (*AMES crosses to ISABEL, holds out his arms as if to embrace her.*)

AMES. (*Tenderly*) Let's sit by the fire, shall we? (*Crosses right. He touches the switch key and the only light is the firelight. She sits slowly on sofa, looking up at him, and he takes a chair near by. Then FLORENCE is heard laughing gaily off up left, and a moment later she is heard again.*)

FLORENCE. (*Affecting reproach, off up left*) All right for you, Johnnie White. I'll tell your mother on you!

ISABEL. (*Softly*) The fire's pleasant, even in April, isn't it?

AMES. Yes. Do you think you could say to me good night, dear, without the good night?

ISABEL. I think I could—if you're sure you don't mind anything you didn't see in the Bible, dear.

AMES. You infant!

ISABEL. Oh! (*AMES takes her hand, kisses it, and then lifts her hand to his cheek. ISABEL gives a little exclamation of delight.*)

CURTAIN

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PROPERTY PLOT

"THE INTIMATE STRANGERS"

ACT ONE

Lantern

Stove—pail of coal

Printed posters—giving notice of changes in schedule;

A Navy Recruiting Poster; a "warning" concerning forest fires

A penny-in-the-slot weighing machine

"NO SMOKING" sign

Clock (at rise set for seventeen minutes after six)

Four or five wooden benches, with iron legs, the feet screwed to the floor

A small lunch-basket (with egg and sandwich in it)

A small Thermos bottle (with coffee in it)

Several traveling bags

A couple of guns in cases

Trout-fishing outfit

Telegraph instrument clicking off R.

Matches

Pocket Knife

Cigarette case filled

Lady's muff

Lady's fur coat

ACT TWO

Branched lustre old candleabrum

Two single luster candle sticks

4 pictures of landscapes framed in simple gilt frame

Phonograph; lively dance record

Baby-grand piano

Closed cabinet, all wood, no glass

Lamp by the piano

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Lamp on piano showing tan shade
Books on table
Flowers in jar on piano
Flowers in glass vase on table
Dust rag for Henry
Electric bell off L.
Telegram blanks
Work bag
Bag of tennis balls, racket and etc.
Old mahogany case, in which is a folding daguerreotype

ACT THREE

Crocheting for Aunt Ellen
Cabinet door—opened revealing shelves of old books;
old ornaments of various kinds, small vases, silver
porringers, etc.
Two or three old pistols, a sword; rolled papers, old
and tied with red ribbon; some old books
Case of needles
Bible

Tweedles

A delightful comedy in 3 acts, by Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson. 5 males, 4 females. 1 interior. Costumes, modern. Time 2½ hours.

Julian, scion of the blue-blooded Castleburys, falls in love with Winsora Tweedle, daughter of the oldest family in a village in Maine. The Tweedles name has been rooted in the community for 200 years, and the family look down on "summer people" with the vigor that only "summer boarder" communities know.

The Castleburys are aghast at the possibility of a match, and call on the Tweedles to argue against the alliance. Mr. Castlebury explains the barrier of social caste, and the elder Tweedles takes it that these summer folk are terrified at the social eminence of the Tweedles.

Tweedle generously agrees to cooperate with the Castleburys to prevent the match. But Winsora brings her father to realize that the Castleburys look upon THEM as inferiors. The old man threatens vengeance, but is checkmated when Julian unearths family skeletons from the Tweedles closet. Also, Winsora takes the matter into her own hands and outfaces the old man. So the youngsters go forth triumphant.

The amateur acting rights are reserved for the present in all cities and towns where there are stock companies. Royalty will be quoted on application for those cities and towns where it may be presented by amateurs. Price, 75 cents.

Little Women

A charming play in 4 acts by Marion De Forest, dramatized from Louisa M. Alcott's famous story. 5 males, 7 females. 1 easy interior and 1 easy exterior. Costumes 1869. Plays 2¼ hours.

"Little Women" is the most human and delightful story of a family of girls ever written. A classic of childhood's fables and follies, it touches a responsive chord in the hearts of the younger generation. Yet it is a tale that moves fathers and mothers quite as deeply, for the story may well be characterized as the finest delineation of family love and loyalty.

Produced with tremendous success in the Playhouse, New York, where it enjoyed a long run, and was afterwards toured for several seasons. Royalty, \$25.00. Price, 75 cents.

His Majesty Bunker Bean

Farical comedy in 4 acts. By Lee Wilson Dodd, from the novel by Harry Leon Wilson. 12 males, 6 females. 4 interiors. Costumes, modern. Plays 2¼ hours. Those who have laughed immoderately at the story will be amused by the play, which tells of a cowed and credulous youth who became king when he was tricked into believing himself a reincarnation of Napoleon. Ran at Astor Theatre, New York, after 25 weeks in Chicago. A delightful and wholesome farce comedy. Royalty, \$25.00. Price, 75 cents.

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